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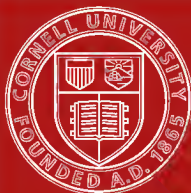
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The Old Settler, the Squire and Little P



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"W'AT'S THE RETURNS FROM AFRIC'S SUNNY FOUNTAINS, SQUIRE?"—Page 286.

—Frontispiece.

THE OLD SETTLER THE SQUIRE AND LITTLE PELEG २ २

BY

ED. MOTT

AUTHOR OF

"PIKE COUNTY FOLKS" AND "TALES OF SUGAR SWAMP"

ILLUSTRATED BY D. A. McKELLAR

New York:

UNITED STATES BOOK COMPANY

310-318 Sixth Avenue

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CONTRIBUTING TO THE HEATHEN,	5
THE TUSHWOBLER AND ITS FRIEND, THE BIBSNOOK, .	13
HIS MOTHER'S NARROW ESCAPE,	27
REDTAIL, THE RIPPER,	39
THE CASE OF SMEDGELEY VS. SMEDGELEY,	51
OLD MRS. HAGENCRAFT,	67
PRETTY NEARLY A RUMPUS,	77
COUSIN KETURAH ANN PEPPERWELL,	87
POTIPHAR JUMP'S GREAT SHOT,	97
AUNT POLLY AND THE NEW DOCTOR,	109
SHADRACK BOBENTIFF'S BUCKSKIN BREECHES, . .	121
THE UNFAILING SIGN OF YELLOW-LEG CHICKENS, .	133
THE GINGERBREAD HEART,	145
HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS,	159
THE WIDOW PUDGECRACK CLEARING,	171
WHY BILL FIDDLER MISSED THE STONE FROLIC, .	181
JEPHTHA PLUM'S BOY JOE,	193
BAMSMUZZLEGIGGED BY CIRCUMSTANCES,	207
MARIA TELLS A STORY,	219
THE TWIN UNCLES,	229
HIRAM WUNCUT, VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES, . .	243
JERRY BILFLINGER'S BALD HEAD,	257
THE OLD STINGO FROM SAN DOMINGO,	271
THE SUGAR SWAMP SNAKE-BITE CURE,	283
ANDY BLINK'S OATH,	293

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
"W'AT'S THE RETURNS FROM AFRIC'S SUNNY FOUNTAINS, SQUIRE?"	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"AN' HANK KEP' ON A-FISHIN',"	44
"W'AT D'YE THINK THESE PAPERS IS, CONSARN YE?"	
HE YOOPEd,	64
"THEN FOLKS GOT TO SAYIN' TH'T OL' MISS HAGEN-CRUFFT WERE A WITCH,"	71
"AN' THE FUST PERSON HE RUN AG'IN WERE AUNT POLLY,"	118
"HIM 'N' THE DOMINIE USETY HEV IT HAMMER 'N' TONGS,"	142
"THEN, SONNY, BE KEERFUL HOW YE 'SINI-WATE,"	205
"O SISTER, IF I HAD BUT THE WINGS OF A DOVE!"	217

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

THE Old Settler and the Squire, who figure in these sketches, are characters drawn from life. The originals were, in their day, typical representatives of the backwoods loungee and gossip. The Old Settler, with his irascibility and his extravagant imagination, and the Squire, always ready to nag him and lead him on to his grandest flights, are among the pleasant recollections of the author's boyhood. While the tales here told may not be just the ones the Old Settler was wont to be ready to regale his hearers with, they faithfully depict the manner of his telling.

Little Peleg, who is made responsible here for the bringing forth of some of the Old Settler's most astounding narratives, is brought into the stories as the veteran's grandson.

These sketches, or the larger number of them, appeared originally in the *New York Sun*, to the wide circulation of which among discriminating readers the author is indebted for whatever of popularity they may have gained. None of them has ever been published in book form.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE HEATHEN.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE HEATHEN.

THE ladies of Sol's Ridge and adjacent clearings, under the direction of Brother Van Slocum, in charge of the circuit, had formed a beneficial aid society for the amelioration of the condition of certain benighted dwellers on the earth vaguely known at the Ridge as "heathens in Afferky." The society was called the Feeders of Them that Hungers and the Clothers of the Naked, a title formulated by Brother Van Slocum, who said that it was "ca'c'lated to kiver most ev'rything, the feedin' part of it referrin' to spirit'al sust'nance, an' the clothin' department o' the title suggestin' anything secon'-han', f'm rubber boots to buckskin galluses." In furtherance of the plans of the society, an assessment had been made on the sisters, in their capacity of Clothers of the Naked, for such articles of apparel as the attrition of years had rendered incompatible with the Ridge idea of what properly clothed the naked at home, no matter what it might do for the naked of heathen lands. In response to this assessment, Maria had

brought out a disabled and presumably retired red flannel shirt of the Old Settler's, and a pair of his heavy corduroy trousers, shrunk and faded, and with a visible sense of goneness aft that suggested that the wearer had been on familiar terms with ease—if long and faithful contact with a certain hard-bottomed tavern chair could be dignified by such an expression. Maria had rejuvenated the red flannel shirt by sewing a number of blue china buttons on it, and was proceeding to overhaul the corduroys, when the Old Settler, who was braiding a horsehair fishline as one necessary preparation for the season's campaign against trout, smiled approvingly at her and said:

"I'm glad yer sorter riggin' them duds up, M'riar, but th' wa'n't no use o' doin' of it. They're plenty good enough fer to trout-fish in, jist ez they be. That's w'at I stowed 'em away fer, las' fall."

"This vale o' tears is full o' dissyp'intments, Silas," replied Maria, "an' I'm afeered this here red flannen shirt an' these here breeches is one on 'em. Unless thuz trout in Afric's sunny fountains that runs down the golden sands, an' the onfort'nit Pagan w'at draws this conterbution is a wuss heathen th'n I hope he is, an' spen's his time a-fishin', th' wont be no trout ketched in these duds this year, Silas."

The Old Settler laid down the strands of hair he was braiding. He rested his hands on his knees and looked in amazement at Maria.

"Do you meanter say, M'ria," said he, "th't them garments o' mine is gointer to be shipped to Afferky, with the compliments of the Sol's Ridge Feeders o' Them that Hungers an' Clothers o' the Naked?"

"Sister Billin's, ez sec'atary o' the Feeders an' the Clothers, has the sayin' ez to that," replied Maria; "but this here conterbution is a goin' either to Afferky or Aishy, or to Injy's coral stran's, one or t'other, I dunno w'ich."

"An' w'at in Sam Hill be I gointer trout-fish in?" gasped the Old Settler.

"The wind is alluz tempered to the shorned lamb, Silas," replied Maria.

"Mebby it is!" exclaimed the Old Settler, astonishment giving way to indignation. "Mebbe it is, b'gosh! The wind may be tempered to the shorned lamb, or it may be tempered to the horned ram, but it ain't a-floatin' red flannen shirts an' cordyroy pants around, b'gosht'lmighty, fer them that's clothin' the naked in Afferky to grab at an' slip on ev'ry time they go a trout fishin'! An' w'at's the shorned lamb got to do with it, anyhow? I want my duds!"

"This is an amazin' priv'lege yer injoyin', Silas," said Maria; "an amazin' priv'lege! Think o' havin' an ol' flannen shirt an' a pair of cordyroys with holes in 'em, to be sent over thar to the on-fort'nit heathens, whar mebbby the spicy breezes th't comes soft o'er Ceylon's isle 'll blow through 'em—w'ich wunt hurt 'em none, nuther—an' whar they'll be sure, anyhow, to kivver the nakedness o' some sufferin' soul benighted—ez fur ez the holes in these cordyroys 'll let 'em—an' pertect him f'm the cuttin' winds an' nippin' frosts an' pepperin' sleet. 'Stid o' moanin' over losin' the garments, ye orter rejoice with exceedin' great joy th't they'm a-goin', an' th't the Sol's Ridge Feeders o' Them that Hungers an' Clothens o' the Naked is ready an' willin' to conterbute flannens an' cordyroys to'ards deliverin' the lan' f'm error's chains. But be that ez it may, thuz jest this here about it—if ye don't like it ye'll hef to lump it! These duds is goin' to the heathens!"

The Old Settler rose from his chair. The inner depths of his whole being were moved. He strode into the bedroom off the kitchen, and strode out again with an old straw hat in one hand and his large and ancient cotton umbrella in the other.

"I orter rejoice with exceedin' great joy, 'cause my flannen an' cordyroys is goin' to Aferky, had

I?" he exclaimed, waving the straw hat in the air and thumping the floor with the umbrella. "Wull, b'gosh, I do! I'm a-rejoicin' hard! But I want to rejoice some more. I feel th't ther' hain't nuthin' in the hull world th't the heathens in the freezin' an' snow-kivvered deserts o' Afferky is a-pinin' an' a-shiverin' fer ez they be fer ol' red flannen shirts with blue chany buttons on 'em, an' thick cordyroy pants ez is short in the legs, an' ez hain't got no seat in 'em to speak on! I feel th't if them heathens is kep' out o' setch duds much longer, the wild blizzards o' the north 'll sweep down onter 'em an' swaller 'em up wuss'n the Red Sea swallered the childern o' Isr'al, time they was swimmin' 'crost it on dry lan'! But w'at be we agointer do with the ol' straw hats an' the umbrils? I can't rejoice half enough if the Feeders o' Them they Hungers an' the Clothers o' the Naked turns the cold shoulder on the ol' straw hats an' the umbrils. While the onfort'nit citizens o' Afric's sunny fountains an' their neighbors in the Injy's coral stran's deestric', is a-chatterin' an' a-shiverin' under the pepperin' sleets an' nip-pin' frosts, waitin' fer the Sol's Ridge Feeders an' Clothers to mail 'em them flannens an' cordyroys, wat's agointer become o' our sufferin' feller bein's ez is swelterin' an' sweatin' under the scorchin'

suns o' Greenlan's icy mountains? Thar they stan', 'spectin' ev'ry minute to melt like taller dips, or to git sunstruck till they'm piled up in heaps like chips on a woodpile! Gosht'lmighty, M'riar! W'at be we a-thinkin' of? Here! Take this here straw hat, an' this here umbril! Tell the Feeders o' Them that Hungers an' the Cloth-ers o' the Naked to ship 'em to wunst to Greenlan', an' then I kin rejoice with the exceedin'est o' great joy, knowin', b'gosh, th't we hain't to souls benighted the lamp of life agointer deny, if it takes ev'ry ol' flannen shirt an' ev'ry pair o' wore-out cordyroys an' ev'ry straw hat an' umbril th' is in the hull o' Sol's Ridge to set it blazin'!"

And the Old Settler threw the hat on the table, and banged the umbrella down beside it. Then he rushed out, and ten minutes later was enlightening the Squire and the boys at the tavern on some remarkable points in natural history as they were revealed to him sixty years ago in the Sugar Swamp district.

**THE TUSHWOBLER AND ITS
FRIEND, THE BIBSNOOK.**

THE TUSHWOBLER AND ITS FRIEND, THE BIBSNOOK.

THE Sheriff had come back from the World's Fair, and was telling of all the wonders he had seen. His description of the sights of the White City was listened to by the boys at the tavern with open mouths and bulging eyes. When he described, almost in a whisper, the things he had seen at the Midway Plaisance, among others the Oriental dances, even the landlord got up and exclaimed :

“Thunder! But I wisht I'd a ben there, Shurff!”

And the Squire moved about in his chair and said :

“It beats all! I'll bate if them folks 'd come here an' do anything o' that kind they'd soon git ducked up yender in the mill pond! An' you seen it, did ye, Shurff?”

“Yes!” replied the Sheriff. “You bet I did!”

“Thunder!” exclaimed the landlord, going behind the bar and taking four fingers of the best.

“But I wisht I'd a ben there!”

But the Old Settler sat in his chair without a

word. His lips were compressed and he looked straight ahead into vacancy. He was listening, but nothing the Sheriff talked about in his two hours' verbal panorama of the World's Fair seemed to be of any moving interest to him. At last, when the Sheriff had exhausted his subject and himself and ceased talking, the Old Settler came out of vacancy. He shoved his hat to the back of his head and, turning to the Sheriff, said:

"Them things is all right ez fur ez they go, but who wonned the four-minute race fer hosses bred in the county?"

The Sheriff was dazed. It was some time before he could make reply.

"Why, Major," said he, "they didn't have any four-minute race for horses bred in the county. You see——"

"An' were the double-headed calf alive, or only jist stuffed?" said the Old Settler, cutting the Sheriff short.

"Well, Major," the Sheriff began, "the fact is——"

"An' w'at were the heft o' the prize punkin?" said the Old Settler, waving the Sheriff off.

"I didn't see any prize pumpkin, Major," said the Sheriff, resignedly.

"Did the feller with the tame b'ar hev him

trained proper, or did he hef to hev a muzzle on him?" asked the Old Settler.

"I don't think there was any trained bear on the grounds," said the Sheriff.

"Whose ol' woman got the four shil'n' prize fer the best cider applesass?" unrelentingly the Old Settler went on.

"You don't seem to understand, Major——"

"Were the patchwork quiltin' wuth lookin' at, or didn't ye notice?"

"Major——"

"Who ketched the greased pig, an' w'at did they give him fer doin' of it?"

"Greased pig! Why, Major, there wasn't any greased pig at this fair!"

"Who had the best rootybagies, an' w'at were the showin' ez to mouse-nose 'taters?"

"Gracious, Major!"

"Who spoke the piece 'bout the best way to shet out sniffles in sheep, an' how to cure mules o' kickin'?"

"The subjects weren't mentioned, Major."

"An' how did the pullin' match t'wixt the team o' hosses an' the yoke o' steers suit the folks, Shurff?"

"See here, Major! They didn't have any of those things out there! None of them!"

The Old Settler was silent for a while, and then said:

"Didn't I understan' ye to say that ye'd ben to the fair, Shurff?"

"Certainly. The World's Fair."

"The fair I ben a-hearin' so much about fer a year an' better?"

"Yes. There's only one."

"An' one's enough, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Folks must a lost all their grit, nowadays, to stand being took in so, without sayin' a darn word back! W'at do ye s'pose they'd a done in the Sugar Swamp deestric' if they'd a gone to one o' the fairs they usety hev there, an', arter payin' their little two shil'n' to git in, they was told that th' wa'n't gointer be no four-minute race fer hosses bred in the county? An' that the fair hadn't greased no pig to be chased? An' that the two-headed calf wa'n't on hand, not even stuffed? An' that patchwork quiltin' were shet out that year, and cider applesass wa'n't on the bills? An' that they wa'n't takin' no stock in prize punkins, or in rootybagies, or in mouse-nose 'taters, an' that the hoss team wan't gointer pull 'g'inst the yoke o' steers? Gosht'lmighty, Shurff! The folks o' Sugar Swamp 'd a riz up ez one man, b'gosh! They'd a took the bosses o' that

fair out an' rid 'em on a rail from Dan to Beer-sheeby! They'd a ripped down tents, an' they'd a slather'd sheds, an' they'd a druv things afore 'em clean to the mountains o' Hepsidam, b'gosh, where the whangdoodle mourneth for her young! What! A fair without no four-minute trot fer hosses bred in the county! A fair without no double-headed calf! But, say, Shurff, yer foolin', ain't ye? Tha must a ben a double-headed calf at this fair ye ben to."

"Not one, Major."

"Not even a stuffed one?"

"Not even a stuffed one."

"Then, sir, b'gosh, no wonder the kentry is tot-terin'! A fair where tha's a lot o' heathen gals from Afferky or Injy, or some'rs else where tha ain't much money wasted fer clo'es, dancin' an' wigglin' an' cavortin', an' no four-minute hoss trot fer hosses bred in the county! A fair where tha's a drove o' humpbacked camels chawin' hay, an' no double-headed calf! Pommygranits from the deesert isles, I 'spect, an' not a durn rooty-bagy from Sugar Swamp nor nowheres else! Manny from the 'Gypshin wildernest, mebbe, an' not a sight nor a smell of a mouse-nose 'tater! P'eserves put up, I s'pose, in all the languages tha is under the blue canopy o' heaven, an' not ez

much ez a pint o' good ol'-fashioned cider apple-sass! But all o' them could be stood up ag'in if tha were only a double-headed calf! Think ag'in, Shurff! Didn't ye see one some'rs, even if it were stuck 'way off in one corner o' the fence? Even if it were only a little bit o' one? Don't seem to me ez if they could be a fair that didn't hev no double-headed calf. Be ye sartin sure, Shuff?"

"Sure as can be, Major," persisted the Sheriff. "There was no double-headed calf."

"Then," exclaimed the Old Settler, "that fair has give agricultur' in this kentry a setback that it won't git over, b'gosht'lmighty, fer forty year, not if they fetch over ev'ry gal that is in Egypt an' Afferky an' Injy an' set 'em to dancin' till tha hain't a dud left on 'em! When fairs begins to give double-headed calfs the go-by in this kentry, Shurff, agricultur' mowt ez well go an'—but, say, Shurff, mebbe they had a root-h'istin' tushwobbler out there? Tha's some hope fer agricultur' if they had one o' them root-h'istin' tushwobblers at the Fair. They had so many durn cur'ous critters an' things, raked an' scraped from ev'ry hole an' corner o' the 'arth, 'cordin' to your tell, that they must a had a tushwobbler. An' if they had a tushwobbler, 'course they must a had a flock o' bibsnooks. They couldn't a had one with-

out t'other, for the tushwobbler can't git along without the bibsnooks no more'n the bibsnooks kin git along without the tushwobbler. I hope ye seen jist one root-h'istin' tushwobbler anyhow, Shurff, with its flock o' bibsnooks, at the Fair. If ye did, agricultur' may git over it yit. Did ye?"

The Sheriff seemed to be too much amazed to answer the Old Settler, and the latter resumed his subject.

"Tha wa'n't nuthin," said he, "ez give young agricultur' in the fust days o' the Sugar Swamp deestric' a bigger shove forrid than the root-h'istin' tushwobbler. But he were an oncommon curious critter, an' showed how natur' usety lay herself out, b'gosh, to make things handy fer Sugar Swamp. The root-h'istin' tushwobbler were twenty-seven foot long, not coöntin' his nose, which were nine foot long, made o' horn harder'n iron, an' built fer usin' ez a scoop or a pry or a crowbar. He were shaped e'zac'ly like a seegar, an' his eyes an' his ears was sot on his body jist about where ye mowt say his tail j'ined it. The tushwobblér's business were to dig down clean to the lowest roots o' trees and h'ist the trees out, roots an' all, fer the only thing he lived on were the roots o' trees; so if his eyes an' his ears had been in his head they wouldn't a ben no use to

him, 'cause they'd a ben stuffed full o' dirt all the time. So natur' fitted 'em up high an' dry on the critter's rump, an' consekently he know'd all that were goin' on under ground an' 'bove ground, though he mowt be twenty foot down in the 'arth, diggin' an' pryin' an' scoopin' the roots loose so's he could hi'st 'em out—an' tha wa'n't no hurricane ez ever gallivanted through the woods could do it quicker'n he could, or half ez proper. About six foot o' the tushwobbler's hind end were stuck full o' the cur'ousest holler things that looked like spiles, an' they was spiles, too. They was mebbe four inches long, and had a quarter-inch hole runnin' clean through 'em. But w'at'd a knocked ye the flattest were the raisin' o' the tushwobbler's hide, all over his back, inter sorter loops, jist e'zac'ly like handles on yer carpet-bag. Tha must a ben a hundred o' them handles on the tushwobbler's back, an' havin' not even a sign of a leg, he were pooty nigh the funniest lookin' critter that ever was. He hadn't no legs, an' he hadn't no wings. He couldn't walk, he couldn't fly, nor he couldn't creep nor crawl, yit he didn't live in the woods, but lived five miled away, in the big rocky hollers on top o' Squawkee Hill, a thousan' foot high, an' he went home ev'ry day.

"Ye mowt wonder a leetle about how the tush-

wobbler navigated, but natur' knowed her business when she built the tushwobbler. She know'd that if she stuck legs on him or sprouted wings on him, so's he could travel jist as he wanted to, he'd eat hisself outen house an' home the fust thing he know'd, for he had an all-pervadin' appetite, an' would a histed ev'ry tree tha were in all that hull kentry up by the roots so durn soon that his pastur' would a ben gone an' he'd a starved. So natur' rigged him up jist ez I tell ye, an' then she built the bibsnook. The bibsnook were a tol'able queer speciment o' Sugar Swamp nat'ral hist'ry, too. He looked sumpin' like an owl, only he didn't hev no feathers nor no wings. Tha wa'n't a bone in him nowhere, 'cept his two legs, which was sot square where his tail 'd a ben if he'd a had one. He had long claws, strong ez a blacksmith's vice. He had a bill about two inches long, shaped jist like them funny spiles in the tushwobbler, with a hole in it big enough to fit right over them spiles. Tha wa'n't nuthin' else about the bibsnook that were funny to look at, not till he sot down to business. A flock o' bibsnooks allus went along with ev'ry tushwobbler.

"Tha hain't no use o'me tellin' ye how the tushwobbler hi'sted agricultur' ahead in Sugar Swamp, fer ye orter know that clearin' the timber offen a

new deestric' is the work that keeps agricultur' back; an' the way the tushwobbler cleared it by his root h'istin' beat all creation. Tha's clearin's in the Sugar Swamp deestric' that 'd a ben a howl-in' wildernests to-day if it hadn't ben fer the tushwobbler clearin' of the timber off. 'Course, he didn't keer fer agricultur', but he wanted them roots to eat. The bibsnook wa'n't rigged up to git anything to eat for hisself, but natur' had fixed that. Tha's more sap in the roots o' trees than tha is anywhere else, an' ez the tushwobbler stuffed hisself on the juicy roots he took in gallons o' sap. The sap run along an' come out o' them spiles o' his'n in streams. Sap were the nat'ral fodder o' the bibsnook, an' all he had to do were to fit his holler bill over the tushwobbler's spiles an' let the sap run inter him, jist like fillin' a bucket.

"When it come time to go home to roost 'way up on ol' Squawkee, ye'd a see an amazin' thing if ye'd a ben there. The flock o' bibsnooks 'd climb up on the tushwobbler, an' ev'ry one on 'em 'd hook his claws into one o' them carpet-bag handles. Pooty soon the bibsnooks 'd begin to swell, jist like blowin' up bladders, an' in less'n five minutes they'd all be reg'lar b'loons. This 'd lift the tushwobbler offen the ground, an' the bibsnooks 'd raise up with him clear above the trees,

an' then sail away with him to his rocky ha'nts in the hollers of ol' Squawkee. Gosht'lmighty, Shurff! If they had a tushwobbler at the Fair mebbe agricultur' kin git over it yit! Did they?"

But the Sheriff got up and went home without a word, and the only remark made was by the landlord, with his mind still on the Midway Plaisance:

"Thunder!" said he. "But I wisht I'd a ben there!"

HIS MOTHER'S NARROW ESCAPE.

HIS MOTHER'S NARROW ESCAPE.

“**Y**OU ’member the story, don’t ye, Peleg, ’bout Hi-diddle-diddle, the cat ’n’ the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon, the little dog larfed to see setch sport, ’n’ the dish run away with the spoon?”

The Old Settler had a pleasant smile on his face as he asked the question. Peleg, with a contemptuous toss of his head, looked up from the book he was reading and made reply.

“Fuh!” he exclaimed. “I remember it, of course, gran’pop, but such stuff as that is only for babies! I don’t take no stock in them yarns any more. There hain’t anything in ’em. I’m reading something worth while now. Here’s a book you ought to read, gran’pop. It’s bully!”

The Old Settler gazed over his spectacles at Peleg and said:

“You’re gittin’ so ye don’t b’lieve that story ’bout Hi-diddle-diddle, hay?”

“Course I am!” replied Peleg.

“But ye stick to the one about the man th’t was

so wond'ous wise, 'n' th't jumped into a bramble-bush 'n' scratched out both his eyes, 'n' w'en he foun' his eyes was out, with all his might 'n' main, he jumped into another bush 'n' scratched 'em in again? Ye hain't gone back on him, hev ye, sonny?"

"Yes! He's worse than Hi-diddle-diddle!"

"'N' how do ye stan' on the question o' the ol' lady th't swep' the cobwebs offen the sky?"

"Puh! She's a humbug!"

The Old Settler shook his head and looked solemn.

"Wull, Peleg, I'm sorry fer ye!" he said. "Soon ez a boy begins to hev his doubts about Hi-diddle-diddle, 'n' the man th't got his eyes scratched in ag'in, 'n' the ol' woman th't swep' the cobwebs offen the sky, it's alluz safe to keep a watch on the melon patch when he's around; 'n' he comes home late from school with his hair wet 'n' his shirt on wrong side out 'n' tells his gran'-mammy th't the teacher kep' him in 'cause he couldn't do his figgers right; 'n' he gits the back-ache so orful bad th't he can't carry in the wood. It's a bad thing for a boy, Peleg, w'en he begins to hev his doubts about Hi-diddle-diddle 'n' the rest of 'em, for I've alluz noticed, b'gosh, th't his health fails so that it's all he wants to do to drag hisself to school durin' trout-fishin' time, an' th't

he's liable to injoy his meals better standin' up th'n he is settin' down to 'em, fer reasons th't him 'n' his gran'mammy knows better'n anybody else. What is this here book that you're so took up with, sonny?"

"'Bloody Rope Rube; or, The Demon Lyncher of Red Devil Ranch,'" said Peleg, reading the title.

"Whew!" whistled the Old Settler. "Wa't did he do fer a livin', Peleg?"

"Went around the country hanging folks," replied Peleg.

"Jeewhizz! What deestric' did he live in, sonny?"

"Oh, he lived 'way out West somewheres. You see, gran'pop, he went around hanging folks because he was hanged once himself, and he was bound to have revenge. When he was a young man they took him up because they said he was a horse-thief, and they stretched him up to a tree and left him. A friend of his cut him down and brought him to life again. Then Rube swore an oath that he'd never do anything as long as he lived except breathe and eat and hang every one he got hold of. He got a rope and started out. He'd capture people, no matter whether they were young or old, or men or women, and carry 'em to his cabin way up in the rocks and hang 'em. He

called his cabin Red Devil Ranch. . I've got to where he has just carried off a man and his wife and three children, and is placing the wife and children in good places for them to see him hang the man. Then he will hang the rest of 'em, one after another, and go out after more, I s'pose. Every once in a while he says he'd like to quit his hanging business, but his conscience won't let him. He daresn't break his oath, for that would be wicked, and his conscience 'd never give him any rest. It ain't because he's sick of it that he wants to quit hanging folks, but he's in love with a girl whose father and mother he hanged, and he'd like to marry her and settle down, but he daresn't do it, because on account of his oath he'd have to hang her, too. That'd be pretty hard on Rube, wouldn't it, gran'pop?"

"Wull, yes; pooty hard," replied the Old Settler; "but seems to me ez if the gal wouldn't be tickled very much over it, nuthier! W'at does the book say this here Bloody Rope Rube's las' name is, sonny?"

"It don't say anything about his last name," said Peleg.

"Don't it say th't his gran'pop were ol' Gil Mossbreaker o' the Sugar Swamp deestric'?" inquired the Old Settler.

"No!" said Peleg, showing some impatience at being kept so long from following further the cheerful career of Bloody Rope Rube.

"Ol' Gil had a gran'son named Rube," said the Old Settler, "an' he left Sugar Swamp a good many years ago, 'n' dug fer the West some'rs. I'll bate a cooky th't this here chap th't takes his reecryation by hangin' folks is young Rube Moss-breaker. Speakin' of him bein' took up ez a hoss-thief makes me more sartin of it, fer w'en Rube left Sugar Swamp a couple o' Choppy McBing's hosses went away too, 'n' never kim back. Yes, sir! that Demon Lyncher is young Rube Moss-breaker, sure ez p'ison! But it don't s'prised me none! He comes nat'ral by his demonin'. His ol' gran'pap were one hisself, 'n' a tougher one, I shouldn't wonder, th'n Bloody Rope Rube. W'y, sonny, if Rube's gran'pop hadn't a ben hung hisself, I wouldn't be your gran'pop to-day, 'n' where would you be? Nowhere, b'gosht'l-mighty!"

"Did Rube hang his gran'pop, too?" asked Peleg, ready to listen to an incident in the career of his hero not set down in the book.

"Not ezac'ly, sonny," replied the Old Settler, "'cause Rube wan't borned yit; but f'm w'at ye ben tellin' me 'bout him, tha ain't no doubt but

w'at he'd jist ez soon 'a' done it ez not. No, Peleg. My ol' pap hung Bloody Rope Rube's gran'pap, 'n' done it up brown, too. It makes me shedder all over w'en I think th't if pap hadn't 'a' hung ol' Gil Mossbreaker, my mammy mowt 'a' ben Rube's mammy, 'stid o' bein' mine, an' never'd 'a' ben my pap's widder!

"Gil Mossbreaker sot down on a clearin' in Sugar Swamp 'bout the time my gran'pap did, 'n' they was clus neighbors. Gil had one son, 'n' so did my gran'pop. The Mossbreaker folks hadn't lived there long afore ev'rybody diskivered th't ol' Gil were a livin' terror. He'd ruther fight th'n eat, 'n' w'en he had ben tamperin' a leetle heavy with his hard cider bar'l 'n' went out, folks locked their doors 'n' laid low. No yoke o' oxen th't ever yanked a load o' logs was any stronger th'n ol' Gil Mossbreaker, 'n' he'd jist ez leaf use his strength on a year-old young un ez on a six-foot bushwhacker. The more I think on it, Peleg, the more I know he were this here Rube's gran'pop.

"Ol' Gil's son wa'n't a bad sort o' feller, 'n' him 'n' my gran'pop's son got kinder thick. The pootiest gal in Sugar Swamp in them days were Betsy Tidfit. Betsy's pap had about the likeliest lot o' belongin's th' were in the deestric'; 'n'

Betsy were the best ketch fer twenty miled aroun'. Wull, sir, w'at does ol' Gil's boy 'n' my gran'-pap's boy do but both of 'em git sweet on Betsy, 'n' both on 'em were bound to hev her. It were hard to tell w'ich one the gal liked best, but sometimes one'd think it were him, 'n' then ag'in he'd think it wa'n't. Bimeby, though, my gran'pop's boy took the bull by the horns 'n' says to Betsy:

"'Betsy,' says he, 'w'en's me 'n' you gointer git married?'

"'Well, la sakes, Sile!' says Betsy. 'I'd like to know who's said me 'n' you was ever gointer git married!' says she.

"'Me' 'n' you's gointer git married, Betsy,' says my gran'pop's son, 'or else you 'n' young Gil Mossbreaker's gointer git married,' says he. 'W'at I wanter know is, right squar' on the dot, is it me 'n' you?'

"The chances is, mebbe, th't if young Gil had took the bull by the horns first 'n' put the question squar' to Betsy like my gran'pop's son did, she'd 'a' answered him jist the same. But he didn't, 'n' so Betsy she wiggled on her cheer a leetle, 'n' hung her head, 'n' put her finger in her mouth, 'n' pooty soon up 'n' said:

' "'Wull, Sile,' she says, 'it's me 'n' you!'

"That's all th' were to that, 'n' of course young

Gil had to be told, 'n' he give up. But his rip-roarin' ol' pap had sot his gizzard on his boy marryin' Betsy, 'n' he didn't cal'clate to be euchred out of her. He didn't say a word, though. He jist sot down 'n' planned. Oh, he were the ancister o' the Demon Lyncher o' Red Devil Ranch, sonny, 'n' I know it!

"My gran'pop's son built a cabin fer to put his wife in w'en they got hitched, 'n' w'at sh'd it do but burn down the fust night it were done. Young Sile wa'n't loaded down with money, but he went to work 'n' put up another house on his clearin'. That un were burnt down, too, 'n' the young feller were took with an oncommon fit o' the blues. He went out one day to set some b'ar traps, 'n' a couple o' choppers helped him bend down a big hick-'ry saplin' 'n' fasten its top to the groun' with a strong slippin' noose snare tied to it, hopin' to ketch a p'tic'lar foxy ol' b'ar th't had turned up his nose at all his other traps, fer Sile had to git a pile o' skins 'fore he k'd build his house ag'in.

"Arter the choppers helped Sile bend the stiff saplin' down 'n' fasten it, they left him. He were kind o' makin' things look nat'ral around the big snare, w'en all of a suddent sumpin' grabbed him f'm tohind, 'n' 'fore he k'd say boo his arms was tied together, 'n' so was his legs. Then he were

chucked on the ground, 'n' lookin' up he seen ol' Gil Mossbreaker standin' over him, 'n' grinnin' like a hyeny. Sile couldn't say a word, he were so struck dumb. Arter ol' Gil had grinned 'n' glared at him a spell, he drawed a rope f'm under his coat. It had a noose in one end. He went to a tree a few yards away, tied t'other end o' the rope to a limb, 'n' let the slippin' noose dangle down. Then he kim back 'n' says to Sile:

"'Do ye know w'at yer gointer do?' says he. 'Yer gointer commit suicide!' says he.

"My gran'pop's sen didn't say a word. He know'd th' wa'n't no use. But he kep' a workin' his han's in the rope they was tied with, 'n' he foun' th't if he k'd hev about five minutes' time he k'd work his han's loose, 'n' then he'd try 'n' do sumpin'.

"'Yer gointer commit suicide,' says ol' Gil, grinnin', 'n' here's a letter yer gointer leave to-hind y'.'

"Ol' Gil took a letter outen his pocket. It had Sile's name signed to it, 'n' were writ to Betsy. It said th't he were broke up 'n' diskeridged over the burnin' of his cabins, 'n' ez he couldn't build another he had thort the bes' thing he k'd do were to hang hisself 'n' leave her free to marry young Gil Mossbreaker.

"'I burnt yer cabins!' says ol' Gil, grinnin' more 'n' more, "'n' now I'm gointer hang ye! Won't folks be sorry w'en they hear th't setch a likely chap ez you couldn't stan' misfortun' 'n' went 'n' killed hisself?"

"Sile laid close to whar the hick'ry saplin' were tied to the groun'. Ez ol' Gil were talkin' he turned his back to Sile to look at the gallus he had rigged up fer puttin' the boy outen his way. Sile had got his hands loose by this time. He slipped his huntin' knife out, 'n', quick ez a flash, cut the rope th't held the hick'ry saplin' down. The stiff saplin' sprung back like a hurricane, 'n' ez it went up it ketched ol' Gil 'n' h'isted him twenty foot in the air. He turned a reg'lar summerset, 'n' in floppin' over he shot his head plumb through the noose he had fixed fer hangin' poor Sile! He spluttered an' kicked 'n' twisted, but it wa'n't no use, 'n' by the time my gran'pop's boy got up 'n' untied his legs, ol' Gil Mossbreaker had passed over Jurd'n!

"Sile married Betsy, 'n' got to be my pap; but jist see how consarned nigh I kim to not havin' any pap, sonny, 'n' w'at a narrer escape Betsy had f'm bein' the mammy o' Bloody Rope Rube, the Demon Lyncher of Red Devil Ranch!"

REDTAIL, THE RIPPER.

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WHEN the Old Settler stepped into the tavern one day just after the trout-fishing season opened, he found the Squire and the boys in ecstasies over a basket of trout that one of them had just brought in; and after the savory fish, in the garnishing of ferns, had been sufficiently admired and commented upon, and their fragrance somewhat modified by the aroma of several samples of assorted goods, the Old Settler sat down and said:

“The bes’ trout-fisher I ever know’d were Hank Yellrack o’ Sugar Swamp. An’ the bigges’ trout I ever know’d were ol’ Redtail the Ripper, o’ the same deestric’. An’ he wa’n’t only the bigges’ trout, but he were the knowin’est. He lived in McGonigle’s Run, an’ even w’en the fust settler in the Sugar Swamp deestric’, w’ich were Honey McGonigle hisself, shucked his fust wolf on the banks o’ that run, Redtail the Ripper wa’n’t no yearlin’, not by ez much ez thirty years, ez nigh ez Honey McGonigle could figure, an’ he could figure ye up the age of the oldest crow to within an hour

o' its hatchin', if y'd unly jis' give him one of its tail feathers to git his bearin's from; an' ye know crows is a hundred years old 'fore they've hardly begun to cut their milk-teeth yit.

"Honey McGonigle lived in Sugar Swamp dees-
tric' nine year 'fore he were crowded by neighbors
much, the nearest ones bein' 'Riar Snortbore's
family, ez lived ten miled f'm Honey's cabin; an'
off an' on fer them nine year Honey fished an' fished
an' fished fer Redtail the Ripper, 'thout even git-
tin' ez much satisfaction outen the sly ol' moss-
back ez the losin' of a hook in his jaw. The trout
were 'bout the size of a nice fat baby, even in
Honey McGonigle's day, an' the name o' Redtail
the Ripper were give to him 'cause his tail were
'bout the color of a robin's chist, an' 'cause he
were a ripper, an' no mistake. An' so Honey
fished an' fished till the day he were gethered to
his fathers, an' the Ripper kep' on a-growin' big-
ger an' knowiner, an' a-waxin' fatter an' fatter.
Then new gin'rations o' fishers tried their han's
on him, an' fished high an' low an' deep an' shal-
ler fer him, trailin' flies an' sinkin' bugs, an'
coaxin' of him with all sorts o' traps an' contri-
vances an' snares fer the wary an' the onwary; but
ol' Redtail the Ripper unly laid back an' larfed in
his sleeve, an' showed hisself here an' there an' now

an' then in McGonigle's Run, jist to keep the ball a rollin'.

"Fifty year arter the days o' Honey McGonigle I fust see the Ripper, an' folks was a-fishin' fer him yit. Gin'rations had kim an' gin'rations had gone, b'gosh, an' still ol' Redtail the Ripper were on deck, fat an' sassy, but a-showin' of his years a leetle. Then Hank Yellrack 'peared on the scene. Hank could ketch trout wuther the water were high or wuther it were low, or wuther it were muddier th'n a gutter or clearer th'n a jar o' strained honey. But ol' Redtail the Ripper larked at Hank an' dared him to ketch him, jist the same ez he had the heaps an' heaps o' ordin'ry trout-fishers, w'ich had kim up like a flower in the mornin', so to speak, an' ben cut down in the evenin', b'gosh, like a jimson weed, an' had left the glidin' waters o' McGonigle's Run fer the rollin' tides o' Jurdan. The impidence o' the Ripper, an' the way he had o' eucherin' Hank, no matter how cute an' cunnin' he played his hand, tore Hank all up, but he kep' a-follerin' that trout up an' down the run, year in an' year out, fer fifteen year, 'cause he'd took a oath to captur' ol' Redtail the Ripper or purrish in the 'tempt. At the end o' that time Hank were shrunk 'most to a shadder. His eyes was sot back in his head so's

they looked like green marbles in holes in the ground, an' he hadn't no more appetite th'n a dead calf.

"'But never mind,' Hank usety say. 'I'm jist a savin' o' my appetite fer the day th't I yank ol' Redtail outen his hole, so's I kin hev it all in one heap, an' jist set it to workin' on his contrairy carcase, b'iled, fried, an' bri'led, an' fatten up on him like a goose in a cellar crammed with meal, an' come out sassy an' chipper ez a fightin' cock.'

"An' Hank kep' on a-fishin'.

"Ye mowt nat'rally s'pose th't durin' the hundred year er so th't the Ripper had knocked around in McGonigle's Run th't he orter be gittin' a leetle old hisself, an' ye'd sp'ose right. Time th't Hank Yellrack fust begun to try an' sarcumvent ol' Redtail, ez I tol' ye, the fish had begun to show his age consid'able, an' at the end o' Hank's fifteen-year fight agin him he'd failed 'most ez bad ez Hank had. One eye had took to lookin' ez if it'd ben changed fer one th't b'longed to a dead mack'ral's; his shoulder-blades begun to h'ist theirselves up inter onpleasant-lookin' ridges, an' th' was a couple o' hollers behind 'em th't ye could ha' sot teacups in. The Redtail Ripper's ribs showed up tol'able plain, too, an' his gin'ral build o' carcase were setch th't it didn't hol' out much



inducement for Hank's saved-up appetite, an' ruther made folks think th't if Hank should happen to hook onter the Ripper it'd be a bad thing fer him arter all, ez he'd starve to death, sure, w'ile he were huntin' fer the Ripper's meat. Hank nor nobody else couldn't understan' w'at made the cunnin' ol' fish fall away so an' git so lank, till one day Hank see the Ripper travelin' up stream to'rds Biler's Dam, an' whanged away at him with a load o' buckshot. Redtail stopped an' listened, an' then riz hisself up to the top o' the water, stuck his head out, an' kinder cocked his eye 'round to see w'at the disturb'nce were. In doin' of it he throw'd his mouth open, an' Hank see th't th' wa'n't much left in his mouth but gums, an' a few ol' wuthless snags.

"'That settles it!' says Hank. 'Ol' Redtail the Ripper can't chaw no more. I s'render f'm now on,' says Hank. 'I don't angle for no trout th't's half blind, an' has to 'pend on spoon victuals,' says he.

"I s'pose my ol' mammy, Squire, were one o' the high-steppin'est women th't ever b'longed to s'ciety in Sugar Swamp. But she were 'commo-dat-in', an' a neighbor setch ez th' wa'n't unly a few like. Our nex' door neighbors lived two miled an' a half over to'rads Sprout's Clearin', an' their

names was Buzzer. Betsey Buzzer were a cortion fer borryin' things, an' th' wa'n't a day passed th't she didn't sen' down to our clearin' fer sumpin', wuther 'twere the quiltin' frames, or a kittle o' soap, or mam's specs, or a side o' pork, or w'at it mowt be, an' she alluz got it. Mam alluz would dress up in style an' look pleasin'; an' so one day she made up her mind that she'd git rid o' three or four ruther achey teeth she had left, an' she sent fer Banty Bell, the hoss doctor, an' had him twist 'em out. Nex' time dad went to the county seat mam went with him, an' sot fer some boughten teeth, an' fetched 'em home with her. They was nice an' shiny, an' folks kim f'm all 'round the Swamp deestric' to see 'em, an' one or two ol' women stuck up their noses, an' said th't some folks was gittin' mighty proud with their store chompers an' sich, an' th't mebbe it were all right, but, b'gosh, th' wa'n't nuthin' truer th'n th't pride alluz went afore a fall.

"The day mam fetched her boughten teeth home she were ca'c'latin' on kinder splurgin' roun' 'mongst the neighbors with 'em that night. She were washin' up the supper dishes w'en who sh'd come in but Betsey Buzzer's darter Sally. Mam know'd, o' course, sumpin' were to be borried, an' she says to Sally:

“‘Wull, Sally, wa’t does yer mammy want?’

“‘Mam’s gointer go to a quiltin’ to Mrs. Slupp’s to-night,’ says Sally, ‘an’ she says would ye please lend her yer boughten teeth to wear, an’ she’ll break ‘em in fer ye.’

“Course mam were sorry, but she said she couldn’t spare ‘em that night, an’ Sally went back home in a huff. Mam she put the teeth on an’ went out to make her splurge. On the bridge crossing McGonigle’s Run she met Dominie Skinner, an’ she begun to talk to him, a leetle thick an’ cold-in-the-head like, owin’ to the room the new teeth took up, but the teeth showed up in the moonlight like gravestuns. W’ile she was talkin’, mam had to sneeze, an’ she did, an’ kebizz! went the boughten teeth outen her mouth. They never stopped till they plunked in the creek, an’ o’ course was carried away ‘long the bottom. Arter mam kim to herself all she said were:

“‘It’s a jedgment on me,’ she says, ‘fer not ‘commodatin’ a neighbor!’

“A year arter that Hank Yellrack were fishin’ near Biler’s Dam, w’en w’at does he see but ol’ Redtail the Ripper sailin’ ‘roun’ in the deep hole, fat ez a prize hog, an’ ez lively an’ frisky ez a colt. Hank were hidin’ ahind a stump, eatin’ a hunk o’ pork an’ johnny cake fer his grub, an’ soon ez

he got over his start at seein' the Ripper, an' him in-joyin' setch amazin' health, he chucked a piece o' the pork in the water to see w'at the trout 'd do. Ol' Redtail grabbed it an' downed it. Then, not spectin' the Ripper wouldn't see the trick, he baited his hook with pork, an' w'en the fish had his back turned, Hank dropped it in. The Ripper give one swash an' gobbled the bait! Hank give a yank, an' had a hook in ol' Redtail at last. He hollered an' yelled, an' all the men at the sawmill kim a runnin' out to the dam. The big fish tried to take Hank down stream, but Hank held him up an' wouldn't let him. Bimeby ol' Redtail turned head squar' up stream an' rushed right to'rds Hank. He riz up to the top till the hull o' his big head were onkivered. Then he winked one o' his glassy eyes, opened his mouth wide, and the nex' minute Hank were turnin' back summersets on the bank, an' the Ripper duv down, held his tail 'bove the water fer a minute, an' wiggled it at the 'stonished sawmill men, and 'way he went. Hank picked hisself up an' looked sheepish. But w'en he looked at his hook he 'most fainted. He see then how it were th't Redtail the Ripper had turned up so fat. On the hook were my mammy's boughten teeth! The Ripper had found 'em in the creek, fitted 'em in his jaw, an' went to feedin' on

the fat o' the land agin'. 'Course, w'en he foun' th't he were ketched by Hank, an' th't he couldn't git away, he jist give up the teeth like a leetle man, an' ez good ez said:

“‘Good-by, you fellers, an’ be durned to ye!’

“An’ he wa’n’t never seen in McGonigle’s Run ag’in.”

THE CASE OF SMEDGELEY VS.
SMEDGELEY.

THE CASE OF SMEDGELEY VS. SMEDGELEY.

“**I** SEE by the county paper, Major,” said the Squire, “th’t Sol Dooclaw’s son Mose ain’t satisfied with the will the ol’ man left, ’cause it don’t seem to settle much o’ the Dooclaw property on to nobody but Mose’s brother Jase an’ his fam’ly, an’ he’s gointer hev the law take a whack at it.”

“More’n likely,” replied the Old Settler. “Jase Dooclaw is a good deal setch a clutchin’ sort of a feller-cit’zen ez Bully Bill Smedgeley were, but the chances is th’t things wun’t turn out ez amaz-in’ lucky fer Jase’s brother Mose ez they did wunst fer Bully Bill’s brother Hackenberry, time he sot up the law ag’in Bully Bill’s gobblin’ up all the Smedgeley clearin’s in the Sugar Swamp deestric’. Them was the days w’en natur’ took a hand in seein’ th’t folks got jestice, an’ w’en witnesses th’t nobody hadn’t never thunk o’ s’penyin’ tumbled onter the stand in time to yank inner-cence outen the bogs o’ diffikilty, and chuck guilt head over heels inter the slopholes o’ confusion

clean up to its neck. But natur' don't seem to be like she usety were—leastways, not the way th't I recomember her. You mind the great will case o' Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley, don't ye, Squire?"

"I know'd a Smedgeley wunst th't lived over beyent Lost Crow Barren," said the Squire, "but the name wa'n't Bully Bill nor Hackenberry. The name were Sophrony, an' she married a Coblink. Were Sophrony in the lawsuit?"

"I lived in Sugar Swamp in them days," said the Old Settler, "an' know'd ev'rybody f'm where the deestric' begun to where it left off, but I never heerd o' no Sophrony Smedgeley. She hadn't nuthin't to do with the case."

"Not ez much ez bein' a witness?" asked the Squire.

"No, sir," said the Old Settler, emphatically.

"She mowt ha' know'd one o' the lawyers, mebbe," said the Squire.

"Mebbe," said the Old Settler. "Lawyers wa'n't very p'tic'lar who they know'd, in them days."

"Or mebbe her brother-in-law, Sam Coblink, who were a constable wunst, mowt 'a' had sum-pin' to do with 'restin' somebody in the case," persisted the 'Squire.

"Th' wa'n't nobody 'rested!" exclaimed the Old Settler, waxing warm. "Th' were some one in

jail fer sheep stealin', though, I recomember, an' sence ye 'minded me of it, the name were Coblink!"

"Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley!" said the 'Squire, tapping his forehead with his knuckles. "Seems to me I orter 'member a leetle sumpin' 'bout that case. Who were the Jedge, Major?"

"Ol' Snappy Filer, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "An' a rip-snorter he were, too!"

"There!" ejaculated the 'Squire, slapping the Old Settler on the knee. "I know'd th' orter be somebody mixed up in that case th't were f'miliar to me. Sophrony's second cousin, Artemesy Bone, worked fer Jedge Filer wunst! Course! Consequently Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley must ha' ben a case ez were a case. I disremember the verdic', Major. Did the jury say 'Not guilty, but don't do it ag'in?' or did they hang the plaintiff?"

"Jestice were done by the verdic' clean to the top notch!" said the Old Settler; "an' if juries k'd ha' been p'voked inter hangin' plaintiffs in them days, Squire, an' you had been a plaintiff, jestice 'd ha' ben done to you, too, b'gosht'lmighty, an' you wouldn't be a-settin' here a mixin' up Coblinkses an' Artemesy Boneses with a chapter o' hist'ry ez tetchin' ez the case o' Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley were. I'll jist tell ye 'bout it, if it

ain't fer nuthin more'n to make ye 'shamed o' yerself.

"Ol' Joab Smedgeley were one o' the fust individu'ls th't had the kerridge to settle at Sugar Swamp an' skirmish fer land. He got a lot of it together, an' by the time his two boys had grow'd up he were the richest man in the deestric'. He were a stubborn ol' possum, an' w'en his son Hackenberry went off an' married little Sairy Lib Bunter, ez hadn't nuthin' but her red cheeks an' her snappin' black eyes an' the caliker dress she were married in, he jist up an' read the riot act to Hackenberry, an' tol' him, b'gosh, th't he mowt go an' grub fer hisself, an' make up his mind th't none of the Smedgeley clearin's 'd ever drop inter his grip. An' Hackenberry went an' grubbed, an' him an' Sairy Lib got along tol'able like, an' didn't ast no odds o' nobody. Hackenberry Smedgeley were ez pop'lar ez a circus, but ol' Joab never reco'nized him nor Sairy Lib. Joab's wife had died long 'fore Hackenberry were married, an' the ol' man made his home with his oldest son Bill. Ev'rybody called Bill Bully Bill, 'cause he were a cross-grained an' overbearin' chap, an' meaner'n jimson weed. It were know'd ez well ez anything could be th't ol' Joab had made his will, an' that he had give ev'rything he had to

Bully Bill, an' th't Hackenberry 'd hef to keep on a-grubbin' ez long ez he lived, fer all the good the ol' man's belongin's 'd do him. Ev'rybody thort it were an all-fired misa'ble thing for Joab to do, Bully Bill bein' so mean an' stingy, an' not treatin' the ol' man p'tic'lar pleasin', for all.

"Wull, one day Joab Smedgeley up an' died. Hackenberry an' Sairy Lib was to the funer'l, o' course, a-feelin' a consarned more bad about the ol' man's kickin' the bucket th'n Bully Bill did. But th' wa'n't no call fer Bill to feel bad, ez he were shet of all trouble o' lookin' arter his pap, an' were to hev ev'rything. Sure enough, Joab's will were perjured, an' it made Bill the hull an' solitary heir, Hackenberry not even bein' mentioned in it. But two or three days arterw'd Silas Bipp dropped in at Hackenberry's an' says:

"'Hackenberry,' says he, 'that will o' Bill's ain't the right one,' says he.

"'W'at!' says Hackenberry.

"'Yer pap made another will only two weeks ago,' says Silas. 'He kim to me an' says, "Silas, Bill hain't treated me right, an' I hain't treated Hackenberry right," says he. "I'm gointer make a new will," yer pap says, "an' don't ye say a word about it," he says. So he made a new will, an' I witnessed it. He took it with him, an' if it can't

be foun' we must ast the law to see w'at kin he did.'

"Wull, Hackenberry an' Sairy Lib they was all obfusticated by this, an' Hackenberry went right down to Bully Bill's, an' he says:

"'Bill,' says he, 'where's pop's right will?'

"Bully Bill kinder looked skeert fer a minute, an' then he blustered up an' says:

"'Right here it is!' he says. 'Here it is, an' it turns ev'rything over to me, ez didn't go an' marry a gal with nuthin' but red cheeks an' a caliker dress!' says he.

"'All right!' says Hackenberry. 'We'll see w'at law were made fer.'

"'Ho! ho!' says Bill. 'We will, hay? Go it!'

"So Hackenberry he went over to the county seat an' hunted up Lawyer Tom Liftum. He tol' the lawyer the hull story. Tom he shuck his head an' looked solemn.

"'It's a squally case,' says he. 'We've got to prove a heap,' says he. 'Bill's got a reg'lar gini-wine will. We hain't. The chances is we'll git knocked out,' says he; 'but we'll give 'er a hack, anyhow.'

"An' so the great will case o' Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley were begun. The day kim round fer it to be tried, an' Bully Bill jumped on his hoss

an' started for the county seat. He had hired all the best lawyers he k'd skeer up, an' didn't feel much worried about the case goin' ag'in him.

"'I got pap's will,' he said to hisself. 'If thuz another un, let 'em perjuce it,' says he.

"On the way in to court, Bill stopped at the big waterin' trough at the Wild Gander Ridge cross-roads to give his hoss a drink. Ez the hoss were drinkin' Bill looked up an' see a couple o' fish-hawks more'n two hundred feet in the air, straight up over his head, a-fightin' like all possessed. The nex' minute he see sumpin' droppin' down to'rds the groun' an', 'fore he hardly know'd it, it kim kerchunk inter the waterin' trough, 'most hittin' his hoss on the head, an' a-splatterin' the water up like mad. Then Bill see th't the sumpin' th't kim plinkin' down were a slammin' big picker'l. One o' the hawks had ketched it, o' course, au' t'other hawk had tried to git it away, an' the picker'l had tumbled f'm both of 'em. The fish were gaspin' yit, an' afore Bill had got over his s'prise it begun to wiggle, an' then swum about in the trough ez if nuthin' had happened.

"'Wull, I'm gummed!' says Bill. 'That picker'l's f'm my pond, sure, an' is jist ez good ez new,' says he. 'I kin git four shil'n fer that in

town,' says he, 'an' that'll keep me a day an' better. I'll take him with me,' says he.

"Bill jumped offen his boss an' yanked the picker'l out, an' strung him on a stick.

"'He's good for six poun',' says Bill, an' he trotted on to'rds the county seat. Now Tom Liftum, the lawyer, were oncommon fond o' picker'l, and he were the fust man th't Bully Bill met ez he jogged inter town.

"'Hullo!' says Tom. 'I'm ag'in ye, Bill,' says he; 'but ye hain't got no objections to sellin' me that picker'l, hev ye?'

"'Sh'd say not,' says Bill. 'Not if ye'll pay the price fer it,' says he.

"'How much?' says Tom.

"'Four shil'n',' says Bill.

"Tom handed the money right out and took the picker'l home.

"The case o' Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley kim on that arternoon. Ev'rybody were there, an' a good many couldn't git in. Tom Liftum he show'd by Silas Bipp th't ol' Joab had made a new will, but folks could see, no matter if he had, th't the will hadn't turned up, and ez long ez Bully Bill had a giniwine will th't had turned up, Hackenberry's chances wa'n't wuth a hill o' white beans. Arter Silas got through witnessin', Tom

he called his nex' witness. It were Hiram Slay, a young bushwhacker th't wa'n't giner'ly s'posed to hev more'n a milkpan full o' gumption. Folks wondered w'at in under the canopy Tom k'd want o' that saphead. Hiram took the cheer an' looked skeert. Bully Bill squirmed an' folks got excited.

"'Hiram,' says Tom, 'yev ben a-workin' fer Bill Smedgeley, hain't ye?' Hiram said he had.

"'W'at did he give ye an' tell ye to do the day arter ol' Joab Smedgeley died?' says Tom.

"'I were burnin' brush,' says Hiram, 'an' Bully Bill handed me two or three pieces o' paper an' tol' me to chuck 'em in the fire.'

"'Did ye do it?' says Tom.

"'No,' says Hiram. 'I kep' 'em!' says he.

"'Jeewhizz! but folks got excited then! 'Here's the new will!' they says.

"'Hev ye got 'em now?' says Tom.

"'No!' says Hiram.

"'Where be they?' says Tom.

"'Dunno!' says Hiram.

"Then everybody's hopes dropped like a stun. Bully Bill he stretched up an' grinned, an' looked comf'table ag'in. His lawyers w'ispered an' laughed to one another.

"'W'at did ye do with 'em?' says Tom, not mindin' w'at were goin' on.

“‘Wull,’ says Hiram, ‘me an’ Mag Streeter were spoonin’, an’ Mag went over to the Wild Gander Ridge, an’ she says to me if I didn’t write to her she’d git another feller; an’ so w’en I see them pieces o’ paper th’t Bully Bill gimme I thort mebbe I k’d scribble sumpin’ on ’em an’ send it to Mag, an’ keep her so she wouldn’t git another feller.’

“Bully Bill’s lawyer kep’ ’bjectin’ an’ ’bjectin’, an’ folks laughed till the ruff ’most riz up, but Tom kep’ Hiram at it.

“‘Wull,’ says Tom, ‘then w’at ’d ye do?’

“‘I squeezed the papers inter my t’backy box an’ put the box in my pocket,’ says Hiram.

“‘Lemme see yer t’backy box,’ says Tom, an’ folks was all excited ag’in.

“‘Hain’t got it,’ says Hiram.

“‘Where is it?’ says Tom.

“‘Lost it in twenty foot o’ water,’ says Hiram, and the folks all groaned ag’in.

“Then Tom ’scused Hiram, an’ folks said the witness had better ben left off the stand. Bully Bill were grinnin’ like a monkey. The nex’ thing Tom Liftum done made a buzz.

“‘Yer Honor,’ says he, ‘I call Bill Smedgeley!’

“Bully Bill ’most jumped outen his skin, an’ he k’d hardly keep f’m tremblin’ w’en he took the cheer.

“‘Did ye sell me sumpin’ to-day?’ says Tom.

“‘Yes,’ says Bill.

“‘W’at did ye sell me?’ says Tom.

“‘A six-poun’ picker’l,’ says Bill.

“‘Did it come outen your pond?’ says Tom.

“‘Ye bate it did!’ says Bully Bill. ‘Th’ ain’t no picker’l in any other pond ’roun’ Sugar Swamp!’ says he.

“‘That’s all!’ says Tom, an’ folks begun to think th’t the slick an’ slippery Tom Liftum were gone plumb crazy.

“‘Now, yer Honor,’ says Tom, ‘I want to call myself ez the nex’ witness,’ says he, an’ he done it, an’ sot down in the cheer.

“‘Yer Honor,’ says he, ‘an’ gentlemen o’ the jury. Ye heerd the las’ witness say th’t he sold me a six-poun’ picker’l to-day, an’ th’t it were ketched outen his pond. Wull, yer Honor an’ gentlemen o’ the jury, he did,’ says Tom. ‘In cleanin’ that picker’l I foun’ sumpin’ in its maw. Hiram Slay,’ says Tom, ‘stan’ up!’

“Hiram popped up outen his cheer like a jump-in’-jack. Tom hel’ sumpin’ up.

“‘Hiram,’ says he, ‘is this the t’backy box th’t ye lost in twenty foot o’ water?’

“‘Great spooks!’ says Hiram, with his eyes a-bulgin’. ‘That’s my t’backy box, sartin!’

"'Good!' says Tom. 'The t'backy box is what I found in the picker'l! An' is these the pieces o' paper th't ye squeezed inter it?' says Tom.

"'Sure ez turkey eggs!' says Hiram.

"'Good!' says Tom. 'The pieces o' paper is what I found in the t'backy box!'

"Folks k'd hardly keep in f'm howlin' by this time, an' Bully Bill were a sight fer to see.

"'Now, then, yer Honor, an' gentlemen o' the jury,' says Tom, cool an' collected ez a lightnin'-rod peddler, 'let's see w'at these papers is;' an' quicker 'most th'n I kin tell ye he pasted 'em together, an' wavin' 'em under the nose o' Bully Bill he yooped out:

"'W'at d'ye think these papers is, consarn ye?' he yooped. 'W'y, they'm ol' Joab Smedgeley's new will, all signed, sealed, an' delivered, ez sound an' proper ez a copper kittle!'

"The folks jist yelled an' howled an' kicked, an' Bully Bill's lawyers carried him out ez w'ite an' limber ez a new-bleached sheet. Them papers was ol' Joab's new will, sure enough. It left ev'rything to Hackenberry an' Sairy Lib, an' that ended the case o' Smedgeley ag'in Smedgeley. Be ye 'shamed o' yerself now, Squire, or ain't th' no shame in ye?"

The Squire said nothing. He rose deliberately



"W'AT D'YE THINK THESE PAPERS IS, CONSARN YE?" HE YOOPED.—Page 64.

from his chair, called for a leetle o' the best the house sot out, drank it and paid for it, and went home without a word. The Old Settler gazed after him in open-mouthed astonishment as he disappeared. Then he whacked the floor with his cane and exclaimed:

“He hain't got no more shame, b'gosht'lmighty, th'n thuz fleas on a catfish!”

OLD MRS. HAGENCRAFT.

OLD MRS. HAGENCRAFT.

“**I** HEERD the ol’ screech owl hootin’ its fust spring song t’other night, Squire,” said the Old Settler, “an’ it put me in mind o’ the story of poor Sam Doughty, who made the clearin’ in back o’ my pap’s place in Sugar Swamp. Ye ’member it, don’t ye?”

“Sam Doughty?” said the Squire. “Him ez married Sally Gallyputs?”

“Yes! him!” replied the Old Settler.

“I ’member Sam an’ Sally, but I don’t ’member nuthin’ ’bout ’em ez an owl had anythin’ to do with,” said the Squire.

“W’at? Not the witchin’ business?” said the Old Settler, looking at the Squire as if in great surprise.

“Never heerd nuthin’ ’bout no witchin’ business ez Sam an’ Sally had anythin’ to do with,” was the Squire’s reply.

“Then it’s time ye did, b’gosh!” exclaimed the Old Settler. “Seems to me yer mem’ry is durn short! Guess Sam never borried no money of ye!”

"No, he never did," said the Squire. "But I 'member some folks ez did. An' I don't 'member th't they ever paid it, nuther. An' I wouldn't hef to reach fur to put my fingers on 'em, nuther!"

The Old Settler was silent for a time, and then he said:

"That two shill'n, Squire, has been standin' quite a spell, I know, but times is hard, an' money comes slow. But yev got it a-comin', an' ez ye got it a-comin' yer jist so much ahead. If ye had it now, jist ez like ez not y'd spend the most of it fer a snifter fer me an' you, an' then it'd be gone. I wisht ye had it! I do, b'gosh!"

The Squire didn't say anything, but he looked as if he agreed with the Old Settler on that point decidedly.

"But about this here owl story an' Sam Doughty, Squire, it's wuth listenin' to," said the Old Settler. "Sam married Sally up in York State. She didn't hev no mammy. W'at I mean by that is, her mammy were dead, an' so were her pap. She'd ben riz up by hand by her mammy's sister, ol' Miss Hagencruft. Tha was a story 'bout Miss Hagencruft, w'en she were a gal, an' the man th't got to be Sam's pap arterw'ds, Jim Doughty. The story were th't Miss Hagencruft—which her name wa'n't Hagencruft then but Smiley, she



"THEN FOLKS GOT TO SAYIN' TH'T OL' MISS HAGENCRAFT WERE A WITCH."—Page 71.

bein' one o' the Smiley sisters, but married Sol Hagencraft arterw'ds—the story were th't Jim Doughty orter married her, but he fooled her an' didn't. He married another gal an' got to be Sam Doughty's pap. Miss Hagencraft's sister Jenny married Joe Gallyputs, and got to be Sally's mammy. Miss Hagencraft never got over bein' fooled by Jim Doughty, an', ez the story goes, got to be a sour an' aggervatin' ol' woman. W'en her sister Jenny got to be a widder an' then died an' left little Sally, with nobody to keer fer her, ol' Miss Hagencraft took her an' riz her by hand. The Doughtys an' Miss Hagencraft lived neighbors, an' Jim didn't hev no luck a-raisin' cattle nor nuthin'. More th'n that, his crops didn't never turn out good. His wheat an' his corn alluz smutted, an' his 'taters rotted, an' his apples was wormy, an' then his ewe lambs 'd all die, an' his eggs wouldn't hatch, an' his cows give bloody milk. Then folks got to sayin' th't ol' Miss Hagencraft were a witch, an' were dosin' Jim Doughty fer foolin' her w'en they was both young. Tha wa'n't no doubt about it, 'cause I've heerd my pap say th't most any night ye could see balls o' red fire dancin' round ol' Miss Hagencraft's house an' black cats comin' outen the chimbley, an' goin' off with their backs up

to'rds Jim Doughty's clearin'. Jim tried all sorts o' ways to git rid o' the witches, but couldn't do it, an' then to cap it all Sam Doughty grow'd up an' fell in love with little Sally, and Sally fell in love with Sam. Now that were sumpin' th't ol' Miss Hagencruft wa'n't countin' on. She had Sally cut out to marry Jerry Grimes, him th't his father owned the big tannery. Now, w'en Sam's pap foun' out th't Sam an' Sally was stuck he were durn glad, fer he thort that if they hitched, ol' Miss Hagencruft 'd git over her spite an' quit her witchin', so he done all he could to bring the match around, an' bought the place down in Sugar Swamp for Sam and Sally to move on ez soon ez they was hitched. Wull, Sam and Sally did git hitched one night, an' ol' Miss Hagencruft were wild. Sam and Sally moved down to Sugar Swamp an' went to makin' the clearin'. Then Jim Doughty died, an' ev'rybody thort the witchin' would quit. Ol' Miss Hagencruft were left all alone up in York State, but she didn't soften a bit.

"'Long about this time a year, an' jist about a year arter Sam an' Sally moved down on the Sugar Swamp clearin', Sally were settin' a-knittin' one night, w'en all of a suddent tha came the on'arthliest whoop out doors th't anybody ever heerd. It

wa'n't nuthin' but an owl, but the whoop kim so suddent an' so ter'ble th't Sally jist keeled over an' fainted, she were so oncommon skeert. Wull, to make the story short, tha were a baby born to Sam an' Sally that night. From all accounts, that were the queerest young un th't ever were heerd on. Fact o' the matter were, ez to that, he wa'n't a-makin' himself heerd on, nuther, fer he didn't never cry, though he had the biggest kind o' eyes to cry with, an' nobody never heerd him make a sound till jist a year to a night arter he were born. He were sleepin' on his mammy's lap, w'en all of a suddent kim the owl a-hootin' ag'in, outdoors. The minute the owl hooted the baby woke wide awake, an' answered the hoot with another hoot jist like it, an' squirmed an' twisted an' acted ez if it were sufferin' with the orfullest kind of a case of stomach-ache, jist ez long ez the owl kep' a hootin' outside, an' the baby kep' answerin' the hoot right along fer half an hour, w'en the owl went away. Then arter that the baby closed up ag'in, an' nobody never heerd another sound from it till jist a year from that night ag'in, w'en the owl kim back and begun the hootin', an' the baby squirmed an' suffered, b'gosh, an' answered the hoots. The owl didn't come only on the baby's birthday. The baby grow'd, but never seemed

to know nothin' or notice nobody, only the owl w'en it kim ev'ry year.

"Now, o' course this most worried the life outen Sam an' Sally. The baby mowt jist ez well ben a b'ar cub or a young wildcat ez fur ez it paid any 'tention to its pappy or its mammy, an' they mourned and suffered over it. We'n the owl kim back the fourth year, Sam took his gun and tried to kill it, but it didn't seem to mind the shot no more'n if it 'd ben the side of a barn. Then Sam an' Sally made up their minds th't the owl were a witch, an' th't ol' Miss Hagencraft were fol erin' of 'em up, an' carryin' out her spite ag'in Sam's pap even on the baby. This went along fer seven or eight years. The baby got to be a nice lookin' boy, but were jist the same ez if he hadn't nothin' human about him, never showin' any sign o' knowin' anything c'ept w'en the owl kim a-hootin' on his birthday nights. Then Lippy Conkright happened to drap in on Sam's clearin' one spring, jist 'fore the night the owl were due, an' Sam were tellin' him 'bout the ter'ble affliction him an' Sally had with their boy.

"'W'y, great spooks!' says Lippy, 'that's easy fixed. Is tha anybody 'round here that's got a white hoss th't haint never been shod but wunst?'

"'Yes,' says Sam. 'Joe Shaftly's got a

white hoss th't only had its fust shoes put on to-day.'

"'Then you go to Joe to-morrer,' says Lippy, 'an' ast him to let ye hev one o' them shoes. Make him take it off an' give it to ye. Then ye take the shoe an' hev the blacksmith hammer ye a bullet outen it. Ye load the bullet in yer gun, fust burn-in' three hairs outen the white hoss's tail till they shrivel, an' mixin' 'em with yer powder. Set right down on yer choppin' block out there, an' w'en the owl comes an' begins to hoot, aim right fer its chist, an' if it don't tumble then my name hain't Lippy Conkright, an' ye'll be s'prised at w'at follers.'

"So Sam he done jist w'at Lippy told him to. Joe Shaftly let him hev the shoe offen the white hoss, an' the blacksmith hammered the bullet out. He burnt the hoss's hair an' loaded it an' the bullet in his gun. The owl kim a-settlin' down in the big hemlock tree in front o' Sam's cabin an' sot out to do its hootin'. It didn't git fur. Sam aimed at its chist an' banged away. With a most onarthly screech the owl kim tumblin' to the ground. It hadn't more'n kerplunked in front o' Sam w'en the boy woke up where he were layin' in bed, an' most made his mammy faint by hol-lerin' out:

“‘Hullo, mammy! yer aunt Mag Hagencraft is dead!’

“Them was the fust words he had ever spoke, an’ he know’d ev’rybody jist the same ez if he’d ben in his mind all his life! Right on that owl’s chist were the marks of a hoss-shoe ez big ez yer hand. That night, at jist the second Sam shot the owl, ez they heerd arterw’ds, ol’ Miss Hagencraft give a yell an’ dropped dead. Right on her chist was the marks of a hoss-shoe ez big ez yer hand. W’enever spfing comes an’ I hear the owls beginnin’ to hoot over there in the woods I alluz think o’ Sam and Sally an’ their bewitched baby, an’ ye s’prise me, Squire, w’en ye say ye never heerd the story! Ye do, b’gosh!”

PRETTY NEARLY A RUMPUS.

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PRETTY NEAR A RUMPUS.

THE Old Settler was looking anything but pleasant as he came into the tavern and took his seat. Something had occurred to disturb his equanimity. He merely grunted acknowledgment of the Squire's greeting, and paid no attention to the boys at all.

"Leetle stormy out, ain't it, Major?" said the Squire.

"Sh'd say it were!" replied the Old Settler. "An' if I'd 'a' stayed home ten seconds longer, it'd 'a' ben a durn sight stormier in th'n it is out, b'gosht'lmighty!"

"W'y, w'at's the rumpus over home, Major?" asked the Squire.

"Rumpus 'nough, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Tha's a meetin' of the Sol's Ridge Cloth'ers o' the Naked an' Feeders o' Them that Hungers at my house, 'n' all arternoon M'riar 'n' the sistern has ben sewin' white chany buttons on secon'-han' red flannen undershirts, 'n' puttin' new seats in last year's hick'ry overhauls, to send by

the nex' mail to Afric's sunny fountains 'n' Injy's coral stran's, to be distribitted 'mongst the heathens. 'Long to'rds the time th't it struck me, 'cordin' to the way my system were botherin' me, that sumpin' orter be did to'rds makin' a showin' fer supper, I begun to git a little tetchy, b'gosh, 'n I up 'n says:

"'Seems to me th't you folks is wastin' a heap o' pooty ch'ice material fer carpet rags, there,' I says.

"'W'at is carpet rags," says Sister Popover, 'longside of a soul benighted w'at hain't got no winter pants?' she says.

"'W'at is carpet rags,' says Sister Bulger, 'w'en ye think o' human bein's livin' in perpetyal darkness an' not a stitch to kiver 'em?' says she.

"'Wull,' I says, 'seems to me th't if I were livin' in perpetyal darkness,' I says, 'I wouldn't keer a durn wuther I had a stitch to kiver me or wuther my nex' door neighbor had,' I says. 'An' besides,' I says, 'how d'ye know wuther them garments fer souls benighted is goin' ter fit 'em? S'pose, fer instance,' I says, 'th't that air pair o' Kentucky jane breeches over there th't Sister Perkins is puttin' a green patch in ahind, 'n' w'ich I reco'nize,' I says, 'ez a pair o' mine th't I ca'c'lated on wearin' a consid'able spell yit myself,' I says; 's'pose that air pair o' six-foot pants falls to

a four-foot heathen?' I says. 'Why,' I says, 'he'll be tangled up in 'em wuss th'n his land is in error's chains,' I says, 'n' then it'll be a good 'n' a blessed thing fer him,' I says, 'th't he is a soul benighted, fer if he wa'n't,' I says, 'he'd make the sunny fountains 'n' the coral stran's look blue, the way he'd cuss!' I says. 'Souls benighted hain't l'arnt how, yit,' I says.

"M'riar hadn't said nuthin' yit, fer she were takin' off the tail of a red flannen shirt 'n' makin' a sleeve outen it fer another un th't only had one sleeve. She got the sleeve in, 'n' then heaved a sithe 'n' said:

"'Though mebbe he don't 'ezac'ly bow down to wood an' stone,' says she, 'yit tha's some one in this here room,' she says, 'th't's ez much of a heathen ez them onfortn'it bein's is th't don't hev nuthin' but a ring in their nose to pectect 'em from the peltin' rains 'n' howlin' hurricanes!' she says.

"'Yes,' I says. 'An' he's hungrier th'n a rip-roarin' cannibal o' the Fidgy Islan's!' I says. 'M'riar,' I says, 'is supper on the programme o' this cheerin' 'n' giddy getherin', or shell I go, b'gosh, 'n' chaw a cold bite offen Greenlan's icy mountains?' I says.

"'W'at is setch hunger,' says Sister Popover, 'to the sperrityal starvation o' them th't's in outer

darkness, cravin' fer the light?' says she. 'W'at's carnal appetite fer victuals 'longside o'—massyful goodness, Sister Giles!' says she, suddently, to M'riar, 'didn't Brother Van Slocum say he'd be more'n likely to drop in 'long to'rds supper-time?' says she.

"'Sakes alive!' says M'riar. 'So he did!'

"An' the way flannen shirts 'n' hick'ry overhauls 'n' setch was scattered 'round that settin' room 'd 'a' skeer't the benighted soul outen all the heathen in Afferky if they'd 'a' ben there 'n' see it, 'n' 'twa'n't long 'fore things was sizzlin' 'n' fryin' 'n' smellin' good out in the kitchen, b'gosh; 'n' f'm the way Sister Popover's mouth kep' a-wat-erin' I'm afeerd all the sperrityal fodder th't k'd 'a' ben throw'd down to her jist then wouldn't 'a' gone ez fur with her ez three cents' wuth o' fried pork 'n' a couple o' 'taters!

"Sure enough, 'bout the time supper were ready Dominie Van Slocum dropped in.

"'Good evenin', sister'n,' he says. "'N' you, too, brother,' he says, meanin' me.

"'Good evenin', dominie,' I says. 'Glad to see ye.'

"An' I were glad to see him, fer I know'd now th't I were sure o' my supper right along. 'Twa'n't long a-comin', nuther, fer Brother Van

Slocum hadn't ben in the house five minutes 'fore the victuals was dished up, 'n' M'riar says:

"'Come, now. Set by.'

"We sot by, 'n' I noticed th't the carnal appetite o' the sister'n fer victuals were 'most ez heavy ez Dominie Van Slocum's, 'n' they didn't none of 'em waste much time on them th't was cravin' fer the light without ez much ez one o' my ol' red flannen undershirts to help 'em along. To'rds the end o' the meal Dominie Van Slocum laid back in his cheer, 'n' lookin' at me, says:

"'Brother, the summer is past 'n' the harvest is ended.'

"'Wull,' I says, 'ez to that, dominie, 'cordin' to the almynic summer is past, that's so,' I says, 'but I wouldn't be afeerd to bate th't we'll hev some weather yit that'll curl things up,' I says. 'But w'en ye talk 'bout the harvest bein' ended, b'gosh, ye come 'bout ez nigh to it,' I says, 'ez Sim Beeler did to killin' the b'ar, time he shot it 'n' found it were Joe Fowler's stray calf,' I says.

"'Figger'tively,' says the dominie, 'the harvest is ended.'

"Then,' says I, gittin' a leetle raspy, 'you'll be eatin' buckwhit cakes figger'tively,' I says, ' 'n' chawin' corndodgers figger'tively,' I says, ' 'n' gittin' away with punkin pie figger'tively,' I says,

'cordin' to that!' I says. 'Kin ye injoy them things much, figger'tively?' I says.

"'Wull, not 'ezac'ly!' says the dominie. 'I p'fer 'em in the flesh, so to speak,' says he.

"'Wull, then,' I says, 'don't tell me th't the harvest is ended,' I says, 'fer it ain't! The oats is in, 'n' the hay is in,' I says, ' 'n' so is the rye. But the buckwhit ain't quit givin' up honey fer bees yit,' I says, ' 'n' it'll be two months yit 'fore we cut our corn! Then there's the punkins!' I says. 'They'm alluz 'bout the last thing to be gethered in,' I says, 'but they'm a harvest, b'gosh!' I says, ' 'n' they ain't ended, not by a consarned sight!' I says.

"'Brother,' says the dominie, 'so it is with my harvestin',' he says. 'Some I hev gethered in a'ready, 'n' some I'm spectin' to gether in pooty soon,' he says. 'I 'spect you to be one o' my harvests, but I'm afeerd ye'll be a late un,' he says. 'You'll be ez a punkin, an'——'

"'Hol' on!' I says. 'Don't go no further!' I says. 'If ye do,' I says, 'the red schoolhouse 'll be empty fer a month!' I says. 'Don't you call me a punkin!' I says. 'I don't 'low nobody, dominie or no dominie,' I says, 'to call me a punkin, b'gosht'lmighty!' I says.

"I'm afeerd I'd 'a' did sumpin' rash, Squire,

if I'd 'a' stayed any longer, fer the dominie got up 'n' were comin' to'rds me to quiet me, I s'pose, 'n' so I grabbed my hat 'n' left the house."

The Squire was silent for a while, and then said, with a shake of his head:

"Wull, Major, ye had a narrer escape."

"From w'at? consarn ye!" demanded the Old Settler, very loud, and with a suspicious look at the Squire. The latter was silent again for a moment, and then said, with a queer smile:

"Wull—from a rumpus!"

**COUSIN KETURAH ANN PEPPER-
WELL.**

COUSIN KETURAH ANN PEPPERWELL.

“SQUIRE, who were the humliest man ye ever heerd on or know’d?” said the Old Settler one day.

“Wull, Major,” replied the Squire, “I never see Nosey Frazelpeck’s uncle Jake Slybox, but from all ’counts he must ha’ ben marchin’ ’long in the front ranks o’ the humliest o’ the humly in his day an’ gineration. Now, there were ’Riar Simms’s ol’ mule Laddybuck. That mule were so old th’t folks around the Corners usety say that he kim there with the hills ’n’ grow’d up with ’em. Anyhow, Laddybuck hadn’t ben know’d to sca’cely look higher ’n his knees in twenty year, ’n’ nobody couldn’t recomember w’en he’d ben offen a walk, ’n’ a durn slow walk at that. Ez fer bein’ skeert, the mule hed ben dashed at by b’ars, ’n’ yelled at by painters, more times th’n he had hairs, ’most, ’n’ no b’ar ner no painter had ever yit been know’d to make Laddybuck ez much ez prick up one ear. He had even ben druv suddently onter the Wild Gander Ridge Brass Band ez it struck up to play a

tune one giner'l trainin' day, over at the Corners, 'n' all Laddybuck done were to kinder squat 'n' shiver a leetle. Then he went on past the band 'thout turnin' his head to look at 'em.

"Nosey Frazelpeck were keepin' tavern at the Corners 'long in them heydays o' ol' Laddybuck's life, 'n' his uncle Jake Slybox were makin' him a visit. 'Riar Simms druv over with the mule one day, 'n' lef' him standin' front o' the tavern, same ez he'd done fer twenty year 'n' better. Uncle Jake Slybox had the reppytation o' bein' the humliest man tha were in all that kentry, but I don't b'lieve him nor his folks nor nobody else had any idee till that day jest ezac'ly how humly he act'ly were. 'Riar had a nice, lively visit with Nosey 'n' Uncle Jake, 'n' long in the arternoon he got up to start fer home. Uncle Jake went out o' the tavern with him. The mule were standin' facin' the door, 'n' hadn't even wunst gone to the bother o' shakin' the flies offen his ears all day long. Ez Uncle Jake stepped out, the mule kinder opened his eyes more'n usual, 'n' they popped wide open, 'n' Laddybuck raised his head. Ez he looked at Uncle Jake his eyes begun to bulge. He stood fer a second ez if he couldn't believe his eyes, 'n' thort he mus' be dreamin'. Then he stuck his ears straight up in the air, 'n' r'ared up 'n' pawed, 'n'

snorted like a mad three-year-ol'. Then he got down on the ground ag'in, give another look at Uncle Jake, 'n' then turned 'round like a skeert buck, 'n' went snort'n' away toward the Corners so fast that he were out o' sight in less time th'n it takes to tell it, his trail bein' blazed by pieces o' 'Riar's gig th't he strung along ez he went. Ev'rybody had ben so took back by Laddybuck's onheerd-on p'formance th't he were off 'fore they k'd put out a hand to stop him.

"That's a mighty skittish mule ye got there, 'Riar,' said Uncle Jake, innercent ez could be.

"'Y-a-a-a-s!' said 'Riar.

"They never tol' Uncle Jake w'at skeert the mule, 'cause he were gittin' old, 'n' they didn't want to hurt his feelin's. But Nosey Frazelpeck paid 'Riar fer the gig. They mowt ha' ben humlier men th'n Uncle Jake Slybox, Major, but if tha was, hist'ry hain't got 'em down."

After a hearty laugh over Uncle Jake and Laddybuck, and an exchange of compliments with the Squire at the bar, the Old Settler said:

"'Member the Tidfits, Squire, ez usety live over beyent Gallus Ridge?"

"Right by the McGonigal Run crossin'?" asked the Squire.

"No!" said the Old Settler. "Them was the

sheep-sniffles Tidfits. Don't ye 'member, we usety call 'em the sheep-sniffles Tidfits, 'cause tha wa'n't one of 'em, from their yaller houn' up through the fam'ly o' nine young uns 'n' their pap 'n' mammy to the ol' brindle steer, but w'at alluz seemed to hev a cold in the head? Course ye do! 'Tain't them I mean, but the Tidfits th't lived further up on the Ridge, on the edge o' the big windfall, where Si Colter killed the big six-prong buck with a fence rail. Ye 'member them Tidfits, don't ye, Squire?"

"Sh'd say so!" assented the Squire. "'N' nice folks they was, too. But about Si Colter killin' that six-prong buck with a fence rail—he never done it!"

"W'at!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Si Colter never killed that buck! Wull, Squire, that's 'bout ez clean-cut a way o' callin' a feller a liar ez I ever had run ag'in me!"

"Who said you was a liar?" demanded the Squire.

"Ye said Si Colter never killed that buck with a fence rail, didn't ye?" cried the Old Settler.

"Yes, I did!" exclaimed the Squire.

"Wull, I said he did kill it with a fence rail!" declared the Old Settler. "If that ain't callin' me a liar, w'at in Sam Hill is it, then?"

"Did you see Si Colter kill that deer?" asked the Squire.

"No!" replied the Old Settler.

"How do ye know he done it, then?"

"He tol' me so, b'gosh!"

"Oh! he tol' ye so!"

"Yes! He tol' me so!"

"Si Carter couldn't lie, could he?"

"He k'd lie if he wanted to, I s'pose. Tha hain't no law to p'vent him!"

"Wull, then, how'm I callin' you a liar?"

"Ye sinniwated, any way!"

"Sinniwated! Puh! Yer tetchier th'n a snap-dragon! Ye start in by astin' me who were the humliest man I ever know'd or heerd on, 'n' I tell ye, 'n' then ye start off on sumpin' th't hain't got nothin' to do with humly folks, 'n' end up by quar'lin'. Ye orter——"

"But hol' on, Squire!" the Old Settler interrupted. "The Tidfits did hev sumpin' to do with humly folks. I were jist gointer ast ye, w'en ye went off a-flyin' on Si Colter 'n' the six-prong buck, if ye ever know'd Ketury Ann Pepperwell?"

"No!" snapped the Squire.

"Ye missed a good deal, Squire," said the Old Settler, smoothly. "She were a cortion!"

The Squire grunted.

"She were some kind of a relation or other to the Tidfits, 'n' had a clearin' wuth a deal o' money over on Rouzer Run. Me 'n' young Pete Tidfit was workin' the woods together one fall, 'n' Pete says to me:

"'My cousin Ketury Ann Pepperwell's comin' down to visit us for a spell, Sile,' says he. 'She's got a durn snug clearin' up on ol' Rouzer,' says he. 'Ye better take to droppin' 'round our way now 'n' then 'n' 'casion'ly,' says he, a-winkin'.

"I hadn't took to goin' with M'riar yit, 'n' not havin' any gal in my eye jist then, I tol' Pete, b'gosh, th't I'd drop 'round his way some evenin', 'n' I winked ez hard ez Pete had. I hadn't never seen Ketury Ann, 'n' nobody didn't seem to know her 'round Gallus Ridge, that bein' consid'able outen her bailiwick. To drop inter a snug clearin' wa'n't sumpin' th't were turnin' up ev'ry day, 'n' I thort to myself th't if I k'd ketch Ketury's eye 'n' settle down on her place on ol' Rouzer Run I'd jist be about fixed, 'n' the fust thing I know'd mebbe I'd be Shurff or sumpin', 'n' who know'd but the Legislatur' mowt sail around my way? I had an idee I'd like to go to the Legislatur' in them days, but knowin' w'at I know now, 'n' seein' w'at I see, I'm kinder thankful, b'gosh, th't my posterity won't hev. that ag'in 'em.

"I were chuck full o' Ketury's clearin' 'n' Shurff 'n' the Legislatur' the arternoon I started fer Tidfit's to make my fust call on Ketury Ann. 'Twere 'long late in the fall, 'bout the time punkins was in season, 'n' squir'ls was getherin' in their last stores fer winter, 'n' b'ars had their heads all p'inted to'rds their cold weather dens. Fer all th't it were late in the fall the weather were warm—one o' them deceivin' kind o' days th't makes ye wanter put ice in yer liquor. W'en I got to Tidfit's clearin' it were good 'n' light yit, but drawin' on to'rds night. Jist outside the house two or three rod, little Johnny Tidfit were settin' on the ground with a punkin. He had hollered it out 'n' had cut a face in it fer a jack lantern, 'n' he'd made a leetle the all-fireddest ugliest-lookin' mug of it I had ever see. Pete Tidfit 'n' his mammy sot out on a log nigh the door. I walked up 'n' spoke, 'n' we was talkin' 'n' jabberin' away, w'en I looked to'rds one o' the winders, it bein' up.

"'Wull,' says I, 'I thort Johnny out yender were buildin' about the humliest-lookin' jack lantern I ever see,' I says, 'but whoever made that un in the winder yender has beat Johnny's fer humliness more'n twenty p'int's. It hain't any-ways nigh ez big ez his'n,' I says, 'but jeewhizz!'

I says, 'w'en it's lit up it'll skeer the ol' boy hisself inter fits,' I says.

"Squire, ye kin 'magine my feelin's w'en I see that jack lantern in the winder jerk itself 'n' walk away! I turned 'n' looked at Pete 'n' his mammy, skeert-like. Pete were stuffin' his coat-tail in his mouth, 'n' his mammy were bustin'.

"'Sile!' said Pete, soon ez he k'd make out to speak, 'that wa'n't a jack lantern! That were Cousin Ketury Ann Pepperwell!'

"I d'know how I got away from there 'n' back home, 'Squire, but I think I must ha' took wing! But, say, Squire! Gosht'lmighty! W'at a match Ketury Ann 'n' Nosey Frazelpeck's Uncle Jake would ha' made, wouldn't they?"

POTIPHAR JUMP'S GREAT SHOT.

POTIPHAR JUMP'S GREAT SHOT.

“GRAN’POP, what do you s’pose my teacher says?” said little Peleg, as he came home from school one day, in great excitement.

“Shouldn’t wonder but w’at she says th’t she wun’t ’scuse ye out o’ school no more on them suddent ’tacts o’ toothache th’t ketches ye soon ez the skatin’ begins to git good,” replied the Old Settler, looking over his spectacles.

This reply of his grandfather was somewhat embarrassing to Peleg, for he and Bill Simmons had stopped at the pond on the way home from school and had tried the ice by throwing heavy stones on it, and found it safe and sound for skating. Moreover, Peleg had begun to feel apprehensive that he was going to have the toothache and the earache by next morning, the way he felt, and had made up his mind to tell his grandmother that he was afraid he would have to stay out of school and sit by the stove with cotton and laudanum in his ear and tooth until he felt better, a course of treatment which the Old Settler had noticed on

previous occasions as usually resulting in great relief, if not absolute cure, about an hour after school "went in." The Old Settler's unexpected reply to his question was such a home-thrust, therefore, that Peleg regretfully bade adieu to his toothache and earache symptoms until some more propitious occasion might offer for their reappearance.

"An' jist hark to w'at I say, sonny!" said the Old Settler, before Peleg recovered sufficiently to say anything himself. "The nex' time that tooth o' your'n gits to achin' you're gointer mog right along o' me to the doctor's, 'n' he's gointer yank it out."

This rather darkened Peleg's future in regard to the symptoms he was afraid would reappear, but suddenly recollecting that there wasn't anything they could "yank out" in cases of earache, he grew easy in his mind again, and, smiling at his grandfather, said:

"Now, gran'pop, that wasn't what the teacher said! What do you s'pose it was?"

"Sumpiu' 'bout nat'ral hist'ry, I 'spect," growled the Old Settler. "If it were, Peleg, jist tell me w'at she said about it, 'n' I'll onsay it fer ye 'n' set ye right."

"'Twasn't about natural history, gran'pop," said

Peleg. "It was about history, though, and something you and everybody else has always believed."

"Not if it's hist'ry, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Gimme facts, sonny, 'n' I'll take 'em in, but don't ast me to swaller hist'ry!"

"Well, it's about William Tell and the apple, gran'pop," said Peleg.

The Old Settler looked at Peleg for a time with a puzzled expression on his face, and then said:

"I remember a fam'ly by the name o' Tell th't usety live on McGonigle's Run, in the Sugar Swamp deestric', but, gosht'lmighty! they never had no apples! They couldn't raise wild gooseberries on that clearin' o' their'n, let alone apples, 'n' all the sile wild gooseberries wants is the top of a stun wall."

"He never lived in the Sugar Swamp district, gran'pop!" said Peleg. "He lived in Switzerland, or I always thought he did, but my teacher says he never lived anywheres."

"Kind o' boarded 'round, hay, like a deestric' schoolmarm?"

"No," said Peleg. "He's a myth, the teacher says. You know what a myth is, gran'pop? You remember telling me about your killing a bear that had two heads and only one eye?"

"Y-e-es, sonny, seems to me I do," said the Old

Settler. "Yes. 'Twere jist at the foot o' Squawkee Hill, 'n' me 'n' Lippy Conkright——"

"That was the one," said Peleg, interrupting his grandfather. "Well, I was telling Bill Simmons about it yesterday, and Bill said he'd bet a cooky that the bear was a myth."

"He did, hay?" said the Old Settler, with a sneer. "Wull, if one o' them myths stands five foot high, with a head on each shoulder, an' one big glarin' eye stuck right betwixt 'em, then that b'ar were a myth, 'n' a durn good speciment o' one at that!"

"Well, I asked the teacher what a myth was, gran'pop," said Peleg, "and she said it was something that wasn't so."

The Old Settler sat gazing over his spectacles at Peleg for some time without a word. Peleg became uneasy, and at last started in to lead the conversation back to the original subject.

"The way I always heard it," he said, "William Tell lived in Switzerland, and——"

"Eddication is a good thing," remarked the Old Settler quietly, shutting Peleg off. "It's a good thing, an' we pay consid'able taxes hirin' school-marms to give the young idee p'int's in spellin', 'n' writin', 'n' figgerin', 'n' joggerfy, 'n' so on 'n' so forth, et cettery. But w'en it comes to

givin' the young idee p'int's th't makes its poor ol' gran'paps out to be p'waricators o' the truth 'n' shyers outen the way o' facts 'n' figgers in nat'ral hist'ry, then it strikes me pooty hard th't eddication is bitin' off more'n it kin chaw, 'n'it 'll hear from me, b'gosht'lmighty, at the nex' town meetin'!"

The Old Settler breathed hard for a while, and Peleg remained silent, busying himself meanwhile in a sly effort to inveigle the cat into one of his grandfather's boots, which lay near the hearth. He might have succeeded, but the Old Settler drew Peleg's attention away by resuming the conversation.

"So, this here William Tell were a two-headed b'ar with only one eye, too, were he?" said he.

Peleg would have liked to laugh, but the Old Settler looked so ominously serious that his grandson restrained his mirth, and related to his grandfather the story of William Tell. When Peleg told how Tell shot the apple from his boy's head the Old Settler was worked up to the highest pitch, and he slapped his hand on his knee and exclaimed:

"Bully boy, William! what a chap he'd 'a' ben at some o' them ol' Sugar Swamp shootin' matches! He'd 'a' won ev'ry durn turkey!"

"Yes, gran'pop," said Peleg, "but William Tell ain't so! There never was such a man, nor such a tyrant, my teacher says."

"Wull, I d'no, Peleg," said the Old Settler. "That's powerful good shootin', that's so, 'n' mebbe it's stretched a little, but it don't seem to me th't anybody could go 'n' make up setch a yarn ez that outen the hull cloth. I don't see how they k'd hev the face to do it. If yer teacher says th't ther ain't no truth in this here story 'bout William Tell, it'd be jis' like her, b'gosh, to say that Potiphar Jump, 'n' Patty Beeler, 'n' Patty's pap, 'n' the five-dollar gold-piece, ain't so! 'Twouldn't s'prise me a bit!"

"Who was they, gran'pop?" asked Peleg.

"Wull, sonny, ol' Ben Beeler kep' store wunst at Sugar Swamp," replied the Old Settler. "Patty were his darter, 'n' a nice gal she were! Nobody never k'd git it through 'em how she k'd be ol' Ben's darter, fer he were sourer th'n the inside of a lemon 'n' crosser th'n a sick b'ar. Potiphar Jump were a likely young hap ez didn't hev many 'arthly belongin's, but w'at he did hev were o' the best. Tha wa'n't a better rifle in the hull deestric' th'n his'n, 'n' all other b'ar dogs wa'n't much better'n coon dogs w'en his ol' dog Belcher were around. Ez fer handlin' that rifle o' his'n—wull,

w'at he p'inted it at had to come down, wuther it were settin', flyin', or gallopin'.

"Potiphar thort a heap o' that rifle 'n' that dog o' his'n, but they had to take a back seat w'en it kim to Patty Beeler. He had a great big heart, Potiphar did, but it were all Patty's, 'n' Patty had traded her heart fer it. But ol' Ben Beeler had his eye on somebody else th't he wanted Patty to hitch to, 'n' he snapped 'n' growled 'n' turned ev'rything to vinegar ev'ry time Potiphar kim round. One day, arter Potiphar had ast ol' Ben fer about the hundredth time to let him hev Patty, the ol' man snapped:

"'See here, consarn ye!' he says. 'I'll tell ye w'at I'll do. Now they tell me ye kin cut things pooty close with that rifle o' your'n,' he says. 'All right,' he says. 'If you'll hit a five-dollar gold-piece with yer rifle at a hundred yard,' he says, 'the gal's your'n.'

"Ol' Ben had a funny grin on his sour face ez he said that to Potiphar, but Potiphar didn't mind it, fer he know'd it 'd be ez easy fer him to plink a five-dollar gold-piece at a hundred yard, ez it 'd be fer him to hit a b'ar. So he took ol' Ben up right on the spot, 'n' they sot a day fer the shootin'. The day kim around, 'n' ev'rybody from the hull s'roundin' kentry were there to see Poti-

phar shoot fer Patty. Ol' Ben took out his five-dollar gold-piece 'n' walked to the post where it were to be put, 'n' then w'at do ye think he done? He sot the five-dollar gold-piece with its edge to'rds Potiphar!

"Ben kim back 'mongst the crowd a-grinnin' uglier th'n anybody had ever seen him grin afore, 'n' every one said it were all up with Patty 'n' Potiphar. Patty were there, 'n' she jist wilted right down w'en she see w'at her pap had done, fer how k'd she s'pose th't Potiphar k'd shoot a hundred yard 'n' hit the thin edge of a five-dollar gold-piece th't he k'd hardly see if it it were turned full face to'rds him? But Potiphar were ez cool ez a cowcumber. If he'd been gointer shoot at the side of a barn fer a dollar a shot he couldn't 'a' ben no cooler. He hauled up to draw bead on the mark, w'en an idee hit him 'n' he let his gun drop. He draw'd the load outen his rifle. Then he took out his knife 'n' broke half of its blade off. He rammed that down on his powder.

"'Jeewhizz!' said ev'rybody. 'Ol' Ben has druv Potiphar crazy!'

"But Potiphar hauled up 'n' whanged away. Soon ez he fired he walked over to Patty, 'n' puttin' his arm 'round her waist hollered:

"'It's me 'n' you, sure ez guns!'

"Ev'rybody run to see if Potiphar had hit the mark. He hadn't only hit it, he had pinned the gold-piece from edge to edge to the post with the knife-blade ez nice 'n' slick ez if it had ben druv in by hand!

"'I didn't want to smash yer five-dollar gold-piece with a bullet 'n' sp'ile it,' said Potiphar to ol' Ben, 'fer I thort mebbe ye mowt want to give it to Patty fer a weddin' present.'"

"'N' so ol' Ben did, too, at Patty's weddin' the very nex' week. But it wouldn't s'prise me a bit, sonny, if that schoolmarm o' your'n 'd say th't Potiphar, 'n' Patty, 'n' ol' Ben, 'n' the five-dollar gold-piece was jist ez much a two-headed b'ar with only one eye, b'gosht'lmighty, ez she says William Tell 'n' the apple is!"

AUNT POLLY AND THE NEW DOCTOR.

AUNT POLLY AND THE NEW DOCTOR.

A NEW doctor had come to the Ridge and hung his shingle out at the tavern. As "Old Doc" Gumble, who had physicked and bled both man and beast at the Ridge for more than fifty years, was getting ready to retire from practice and take things easy for the remainder of his days, the coming of the new doctor was accepted as a matter of course, and excited little comment.

"But it's good that the Ridge hain't got no setch a person ez my ancistor, Aunt Polly Pobblechy, amongst it," said the Old Settler, shaking his head. "It's a good thing for the new doctor, b'gosh, that my old Aunt Polly Pobblechy ain't livin' here, with her never-failin' gin an' snake-root! That's all!"

"Wull," said the Squire, aggravatingly, "what'd yer ancistor, Aunt Polly Pobblechy—whoever she mowt 'a' ben, the Lord only knows!—what'd yer Aunt Polly 'a' done to the new doctor, providin' she had a-ben here with her gin an' snakeroot?"

"What'd she 'a' done? Gosht'lmighty!" replied

the Old Settler. "What did she do to young Doc Spipeeper, ez sot down in Sugar Swamp, time she were doin' the doctorin' in that deestric'? Tell me what she done to him, b'gosh, an' then ast me what she'd do to this here young doctor ez has squatted here!"

"I can't tell ye what she done to him," said the Squire. "Kin you?"

"Kin I?" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Kin I? Who under the blue canopy kin if I can't?"

"Nobody!" replied the Squire, emphatically. "Nobody, nuther livin' or dead! Nobody, an' I'll bate a hoss on it!"

"An' y'd win, b'gosh!" ejaculated the Old Settler. "I'm glad to see that yer with me fer wunst in yer life, Squire! An' I'll say it ag'in, that it's a good thing fer this here doctor that's squatted at the Ridge that my ancistor, Aunt Polly Pobblechy, an' her gin an' snakeroot ain't here, or she'd sarve him jist ez she sarved young Doc Spipeeper, ez sot down in Sugar Swamp time ez she were doin' the doctorin' in that deestric'! Why say, Squire, what Aunt Polly didn't know about ailin's, from sprue in young uns to sniffles in sheep, it wa'n't worth the while of anybody botherin' their heads about. If anybody got poorly, in them days at Sugar Swamp, an' Aunt Polly tried her

boneset on 'em, an' her allycampane, an' her colt's-foot, an' the rest o' them yarbs o' her'n, without fetchin' of 'em round, then she went at 'em with her gin an' snakeroot. If that didn't set 'em goin' ag'in, then Aunt Polly 'd say to 'em:

"'Tha hain't no kind o' use. Now make yer will and send fer the dominie.'

"Gin an' snakeroot were her all-conquerin' ingrejint fer all the ailments tha was, wuther they was tacklin' ol' Jedge Sniffits, or had a holt o' Lippy Conkright's lame mule. An' say, what did Jedge Sniffits do on his last sickness, arter Aunt Polly had fetched him round a dozen times an' more? Why, he thort he'd put on airs an' git the doctor from the county seat. An' he did. Nobody hadn't never thort o' doin' setch a thing ez that afore, an' folks couldn't git over it. But the Jedge were the leader o' fashion in the Sugar Swamp deestric', an' so when Bub Paley took sick four or five weeks arterw'ds, what does he do but think he'd send for the county-seat doctor, too. But Aunt Polly were an ol' friend o' his'n, an' Bub thort it wouldn't be treatin' her squar' if he didn't send fer her an' tell her what he were gointer do.

"'I'm gointer send fer the doctor from the county seat, Aunt Polly,' says he.

“‘Ye be, hay?’ says Aunt Polly. ‘Jedge Sniffits had him, too, didn’t he?’ says she.

“‘Yes,’ says Bub. ‘Yes, the Jedge had him,’ says he.

“‘An’ where’s the Jedge now?’ says Aunt Polly. ‘Dead, ain’t he?’

“‘Why, that’s so!’ says Bub. ‘So he is! I hadn’t thort o’ that!’ says he.

“An’ Bub tol’ Aunt Polly to fetch him round, an’ she turned on the gin an’ snakeroot an’ done it, b’gosh!

“So these things was all fresh ’mongst folks, when one mornin’ what should ketch their eye, nailed ag’in the side o’ Noar Tidfit’s tavern, but a tin sign, sayin’ on it, ‘Cyrenus Spipeeper, M.D., Doctor and Physician.’ An’ mebbe folks wa’n’t stirred up. Some says:

“‘Pooh, pooh! The idee of a man, even if he is a doctor an’ a physician, thinkin’ he kin do anythin’ here ag’in Aunt Polly Pobblechy an’ her gin an’ snake root!’”

“Some others wa’n’t so sure o’ that.

“‘Don’t you fellers go too fast,’ says Noar Tidfit, the lan’lord. ‘Aunt Polly’s gittin’ old, an’ what with clearin’ up o’ timber, an’ seedin’ things down to rye an’ buckwhit, I tell ye that boneset an’ snakeroot an’ the rest o’ Aunt Polly’s yarbs

is gittin' skeerce. Consekently what? Why, jist look-a-here! S'posin' the yaller fever, or the cholery, or some o' them air ketchin' ailin's, should break out in the deestric'. Why, Aunt Polly couldn't find enough yarbs in the hull deestric' to set up ag'in 'em. Natur'ly, too, owin' to the skeerce-ness o' yarbs, Aunt Polly's p'scriptions hain't got the stren'th they usety hev. They didn't half ketch holt o' that rheumatiz o' mine the last heat I had with it. They hain't got the stren'th to 'em they usety hev, I tell ye, an' we'd be in a nice fix if sum-pin' ketchin' 'd come tearin' through the deestric'!

"'Never you mind Aunt Polly!' says Jerry Shinnfelt, the tan'ry boss. 'She's got yarbs enough, b'gosh, stored away in her garret to knock a hull township full o' the wust kind o' ketchin' things higher'n a kite! But, o' course, ez the new doctor is boardin' with you, Noar, 'tain't no more'n right that you should stan' up fer him. But don't run down Aunt Polly. That ain't fair!'

"'Anybody ez says I'm standin' up fer the new doctor 'cause he's boardin' with me, I kin lick!' says Noar, his dander 'most raisin' his hat offen his head. 'An' anybody ez says that I'm runnin' down Aunt Polly, I kin lick him! Who says so?'

"Tha didn't nobody git up, an' things took another turn by Si Groner sayin':

“‘But what does this here mean on the new doctor’s sign, when he says he’s a doctor an’ a physician too? I alluz thort a doctor were a physician, an’ a physician were a doctor.’

“‘Wull,’ says Noar, a leetle huffy yit, ‘ye orter think less an’ know more. Doctor is fer hosses, sheep, cows, corns, an’ setch. Physician is fer folks. Ye didn’t never hear of a hoss physician or a corn physician, did ye?’

“That kinder lifted the new doctor up a peg in the discussion, an’ ez Noar felt good with hisself fer knowin’ so much, an’ ast ev’rybody up to hev sumpin’, the meetin’ broke up feelin’ durn sorry fer poor ol’ Aunt Polly. But Aunt Polly wagged along jist the same ez ever, for she knowed sumpin’ were bound to happen to give her a chance at the new doctor.

“The pootiest gal in the hull o’ Sugar Swamp deestric’, or in any other deestric’, fer a matter o’ that, were Sooky Bunn. But the trouble with Sooky were, she didn’t hev no folks. She were an orphint on both her mammy’s an’ her daddy’s side ’fore she were old enough to know it, and she were took in by the Widder Shellflint. The widder raised Sooky, an’ made her pay well fer the raisin’, I’m tellin’ ye! When she were eighteen, Sooky were ez innercent ez a spring lamb, an’ bash-

ful! Jeewhizz, what a bashful gal that Sooky were! She wouldn't go to no apple cuts or corn huskin's or nothin', an' none o' the young fellers could keep comp'ny with her, 'cause she wouldn't let 'em. So consekently, when her an' young Bill Snockly, a feller ez were jist about ez innercent an' bashful ez Sooky were, stepped off one night together to the Squire's an' got married, 'thout sayin' a word to nobody, an' went to housekeepin' nex' day in one o' the tan'ry housen, mebbe tha wa'n't a stir around Sugar Swamp an' adj'inin' deestric's! I say tha were, h'gosh! Folks couldn't find words to say what they thort about it, an' jist went over front o' Bill an' Sooky's house, an' gawked an' gawked fer a hull day.

"Time run along, an' Bill an' Sooky had ben hitched a year, an' one day Bill dropped inter the new doctor's office at the tavern.

"-'Doctor,' says he, 'my Sooky's ailin' some, an' we're 'feerd it's a fever that's comin' on to her. D'ye think it's likely to be ketchin'?'"

"-'Pooty likely, this time o' year,' says the doctor. 'I'll drop over an' take a look at her.'"

"Bill went home, an' the doctor, followed him pooty soon. He looked at Sooky's tongue, felt her pulse, an' shook his head.

"-'It's a fever, sure,' says he, 'an' from all I kin

see, I'm afeered it's a ketchin' one. I'll know by t'morrow,' says he, 'an' then I'll let ye know what to do. I'll drop in ag'in this evenin',' says he.

"Ez he went back to the tavern he tol' ev'rybody that ast him, bein' a swaggerin' sort of a young conceity chap, that tha were goin'ter be a case o' ketchin' fever at Bill Snockly's 'fore two days was over, an' nuthin' could be surer. He called at Bill's ag'in that evenin', an' foun' Sooky wuss. He left a powder, an' tol' 'em he'd come ag'in in the mornin'. To all anxious inquiries he said that it would be a case o' ketchin' fever, sure, unless it took a differ'nt turn in less'n forty-eight hours.

"By this time Aunt Polly Pobblechy had heerd about the terr'ble case o' ketchin' fever that were threatenin' to carry Sooky off, an' mebbe half o' Sugar Swamp 'fore it got through, but she didn't seem a bit skeert.

"'I ain't afeerd o' no ketchin' fever I ever heerd on,' she says, 'an' I'll go down an' see Sooky to-night an' try what the gin an' snakeroot'll do.'

"Aunt Polly were ez good ez her word, an' went down to Sooky's that evenin', but, ez she said arterw'ds, she didn't hef to use the gin and snake-root. Nex' mornin' the new doctor dropped in to see his patient ez were so dangerous, an' the fust person he run ag'in were Aunt Polly. He kim



"AN' THE FUST PERSON HE RUN AG'IN WERE AUNT POLLY."—Page 118.

out ag'in so soon that them ez had seen him go in an' then come out agin, lookin' so queer, an' movin' in setch a hurry, thort the wust had come.

"'Is it ketchin', doctor?' they hollered around him. 'Is it ketchin'?"

"But the doctor broke away and cut sticks down the road without sayin' a word, an' people was skeert, I tell ye! Jist then Aunt Polly kim to the door.

"'Is it ketchin, Aunt Polly?' ev'rybody hollers. 'Is it ketchin'?"

"Aunt Polly kinder grinned for a minute, an' then she says:

"'If it is ketchin',' she says, 'you fellers that's married 'll hef to dig in to workin' a durn sight harder than ye ever did afore! It's twins!' says she.

"An' mebbe tha wa'n't a time, then, Squire! But the new doctor wa'n't in it, 'cause he'd dug out fer other parts. This new doctor that's sot down here at the Ridge may be ez right as a fiddle, Squire, but I said it afore, an' I say it agin, that it's a good thing that my Aunt Polly Pobblechy ain't here with her gin an' snakeroot, b'gosht'lmighty!"

**SHADRACK BOBENTIFF'S BUCKSKIN
BREECHES.**

SHADRACK BOBENTIFF'S BUCKSKIN BREECHES.

“IF ye should ast me, Squire, wuther I b’lieved in witches or not,” said the Old Settler, “durned if you wouldn’t hev me. It’d kind o’ go ag’in me to say I did, ’cause it don’t seem jist e’zac’ly ’cordin’ to Gunter that folks ez kin change ye inter a b’ar or a wildcat or a warty toad whenever they feel like it is gointer to be skeert inter conniption fits by nuthin’ more’n jist one look at a hoss-shoe; and then ag’in I wouldn’t feel like sayin’ that I didn’t b’lieve in ’em, ’cause I can’t fergit that I recomember Shadrack Bobentiff an’ the buckskin breeches that ol’ Granny Nutslap made for him. I hope ye wun’t ast me wuther I b’lieve in witches, Squire, ’cause I’d like to say that I don’t; but recomemberin’ Shadrack ez I do, an’ them buckskin breeches o’ his’n that Granny Nutslap made, I’ll be durned, Squire, if I think I could say it! So I hope ye wun’t ast me, Squire.”

“Wull, who in Sam Hill’s gointer ast ye?” exclaimed the Squire. “Nobody hain’t thort o’ setch

a thing, not ez I knows on. Ye kin b'lieve in witches or ye kin unb'lieve in 'em, fer all I keer!"

"Squire, I'm much obleeged!" said the Old Settler. "Ye've took a heft offen my mind that's powerful easin' to me. Now I wun't hef to compermise m'self, an' ye kin draw conclusions wuther I b'lieve in witches or not. But they'm cur'ous critters, ain't they, Squire?"

"What's cur'ous critters?" the Squire asked.

"Witches," replied the Old Settler.

"So's fiery dragons an' grizzly b'ars with wings!" said the Squire, ironically. "But what were the matter with Shadrack's breeches, Major?" the Squire asked. "Didn't they fit him?"

"Snugger, b'gosh, than the skin on a gooseberry!" replied the Old Settler. "Snug? I guess they was! They was a leetle too snug, I think, fer Shadrack's well-bein'. Shadrack an' his brother Abs'lom wa'n't geniwine sons o' the Sugar Swamp sile, bein's ez they only kim in there temp'rary. Nobody never know'd e'zac'ly where they kim from, but they sot down in Sugar Swamp one day, an' started in a-dickerin' in sheep pelts, hosses, clocks, or anything they could git up a swap on. If folks wasn't jist sure o' Shadrack an' Abs'lom on ev'rything, they was cocksure 'bout one thing. Shadrack an' Abs'lom didn't never

git the wusst of a dicker. Tha were one thing, though, that the Bobentiff boys couldn't git up a deal fer, an' that were fer Simon Tidfit's black hoss Sam. They was dead sot on gittin' up a trade fer Sam, but Simon wouldn't never bite.

"Ol' Granny Nutslap lived all alone by herself on one edge o' the clearin'. Folks fit kind o' shy o' Granny Nutslap, 'cause wunst when she got mad at Fraley Bunn's folk 'cause they wouldn't give her a pig she wanted, their cows took to gittin' the holler horn, an' givin' bloody milk, an' wastin' away to shadders, an' kep' on doin' of it till Fraley sent Granny a pig. Then the holler horn quit, an' the cows got fat ag'in an' went to givin' milk ez white ez they ever did. Then wunst Pete Jubbs's boy Dan got mad at Granny Nutslap, an' called her a durn ol' squaw. From that minute Dan couldn't talk nothin' but Injin, b'-gosh, an' ev'ry wunst in a while he tried to scalp his mammy. An' he didn't git cured of it till his pap went over to Granny's an' ast her if she didn't think she could use five bushel o' 'taters an' a kag o' cider, with his compliments, an' she sayin' that she thort mebbe she mowt, he sent 'em over to her. Arter that young Dan quit bein' an Injin' an' found his mother tongue ag'in. Granny Nutslap done lots more setch neighborly things ez them,

'cordin' to folks's tell. Mind ye, Squire, I ain't a-compermisin' myself by sayin' that she done these here things. But folks ez never know'd how to lie has told me she did. Consekently, the ol' granny wa'n't over-pop'lar in Sugar Swamp, but she didn't seem to mind it. One thing she did keep a-sayin', whenever she had a chance at anybody, was:

"'Ye wanter keep yer eye peeled on them air Bobentiff boys, I tell ye!' she'd say. 'They'm slipp'ry possums, I tell ye!'

"But folks thort at wunst that mebbe Shadrack an' Abs'lom had got the best of her on a dicker o' some kind, an' so they kep' their eye peeled on ol' Granny more'n ever.

"Simon Tidfit's hoss Sam wa'n't the only thing Simon had that ketched the eye of Shadrack Bobentiff. Not by a jugful. Simon's darter 'Tury Ann give Shadrack ez much of a hankerin' ez the black hoss had. But 'Tury Ann didn't take to Shadrack very hefty, though she didn't turn up her nose an' sniff at him, bein' a reg'lar Sugar Swamp lady, b'gosh, ez couldn't hurt nobody's feelin's, even if she didn't keer the tosst of a muley cow's head fer 'em. Shadrack were a great feller to cut a shine with yaller vests, an' checkered pants, an' blue coats, an' ile on his hair, an' all setch fancy

doin's, an' he sot the young bucks o' Sugar Swamp pooty nigh crazy 'cause they wa'n't up to his pitch in the line o' fixin's. Wull, what does Shadrack do one day but show hisself at the tavern wearin' a pair o' bran' new buckskin breeches. They was jist the color o' cream, an' more'n all, was held down under his boots by yaller straps. Them pants alone 'd been pooty nigh enough to make all the young fellers green; but buckskin pants with straps to 'em! Jeewhizz, Squire! That were temptin' less fort'nit human natur' to spill blood!

"An' what do ye s'pose Shadrack had slung on all this here glory o' Solomon fer? Ez nigh ez I kin git at it, it were fer 'Tury Ann Tidfit. He thort that 'Tury Ann couldn't hold out ag'in them new buckskin breeches with straps to 'em, but would jist give in ez soon ez she sot her blue eyes on 'em, an' name the day quicker'n the shake of a lamb's tail. But 'Tury Ann didn't do nothin' o' the sort, 'cordin' to what folks said, but sent Shadrack away with a flea in his ear, new buckskin breeches, straps, an' all.

"Some time arter breakfast next mornin' Abs'lom Bobentiff kim inter the tavern lookin' ez if he mowt be skeert pooty nigh to death.

“‘What in the name o’ the Grizzly King’s the matter of ye, Abs’lom?’ says Simon Tidfit.

“‘Simon,’ says Abs’lom, ‘my brother Shadrack has gone up a-whirlin’!’

“‘Gone up a-whirlin’!’ everybody hollers.

“‘Yes,’ says Abs’lom. ‘Granny Nutslap has witched him, an’ tha’s no tellin’ where he’ll fetch up,’ says he.

“‘Then, o’ course, ev’rybody wanted to hear all about it, an’ Abs’lom tells the hull story.

“‘Ye know, Simon,’ says he, ‘that Shadrack had his heart sot on your ’Tury Ann, an’ ez she didn’t seem to take to him ez fast ez he thort she orter, he went to Granny Nutslap an’ ast her what he’d best do. Granny says to him that if he’d git a nice buckskin, tanned till it were yaller, she’d make him a pair o’ breeches that’d set him off so fine that no gal in these parts could help tyin’ right to him. “An’ you must hev nice straps to hold ’em down under yer boots,” she says. “Straps holdin’ ’em under yer boots,” she says, “is sumpin’ that the gals dotes on,” she says. “But,” she says, “if the breeches an’ the straps don’t ketch ’Tury Ann like a pigeon in a net, the fust time ye give her a sight o’ ye with ’em on,” she says, “go down to the creek an’ dip ’em in the water,” she says, “an’ then put ’em on an’ dry ’em

by a fire made o' prickly ash," she says. "Then nuther 'Tury Ann nor no other gal, I don't keer if she's Queen o' the San'wich Island," she says, "kin look at them breeches an' say no." When Shadrack told me that I says:

"'Gosht'lmighty, Shad!" I says. "Prickly ash fire! "Why, that's the witchin'est kind o' witchin' doin's!" I says.

"'But Shad he said he didn't keer. He'd try it. So when 'Tury Ann didn't faint away inter his arms las' night arter she seen him with his new breeches on, he gits me, an' we went down to the creek to douse the breeches an' dry 'em, 'cordin' to Granny Nutslap's d'rections. We sopped 'em in the creek. Then I built a rousin' prickly ash fire, and Shad he put the breeches on, strapped 'em down, an' backed up to the blaze to dry 'em. Pooty soon they begun to smoke like a frosty medder when the sun comes up, an' 'twa'n't long 'fore I seen queer things through that smoke. Fust along I thort I see Shad a-stretchin' up like a growin' weed, but I soon see that it wa'n't Shad a-gittin' tall, but the bottoms of his buckskin breeches travellin' up'ards. They pulled straight up like a team o' hosses, an' the straps hung right on to the bottom o' Shad's boots. O' course tha couldn't be only one upshot to this, pervidin' the

straps didn't break. The straps didn't break an' the upshot come. The breeches kep' on shrinkin' up'ards, an' pooty soon lifted Shad offen his feet an' h'isted him in the air. He kind o' clutched an' grabbed to ketch sumpin'; but all he struck were wind. He were steamin' like an ingine, an' looked skeery, I tell ye. 'Fore I could git up an' grab him an' haul him down he were out o' reach. He steamed on up'ards an' passed up 'long a ches'-nut saplin' twenty foot high. Ez he got to the top of it he snatched it an' held on. He scrootched an' tugged. The breeches kep' a-shrinkin' an' a-steamin', an' the pesky straps held. It were a tug of war fer a minute 'twixt Shad an' his breeches an' the saplin', an' the breeches won. The saplin' was yanked up by the roots, an' up went Shad more'n fifty foot at one bounce. By this time I re-comembered that I could talk, an' I hollers to Shad:

““Cut the straps an' come back!”

““He out with his knife an' slashed one o' the straps. That throw'd all the pullin' of the breeches on one leg, an' it flopped Shad over like a tumbler pigeon in the air, an' the last I see of him he were whirlin up'ards jist like a windmill, turnin' about twenty cartwheels a second, an' p'inted fer the clouds. Ol' Granny Nutslap had witched them buckskin breeches, sure ez crows!”

"Nobody had got their breath yit arter listenin' to Abs'lom's amazin' story, when in busts Lum Dix, Simon Tidfit's hostler.

"'Simon,' says he, 'yer black hoss Sam is gone, an' tha's a durn big warty toad tied in his place in the stall!'

"Everybody rushed out to the barn, an' sure enough Sam were gone, an' there sot a big toad, tied to the manger with a long string.

"'Wull, by the Black Cat of Egypt,' says Abs'lom, 'if ol' Granny Nutslap hain't witched Sam, too, an' changed him to a toad!'

"It were a good while 'fore folks at Sugar Swamp got over them skeery doin's, but they was afeerd to lay hands on Granny Nutslap. The day arter his brother Shadrack had been cartwheeled to'rds the clouds Abs'lom went away, sayin' that he couldn't stand it in them parts no more. A week arterw'ds Joe Bundy kim home from a trip down the river, an' said he'd be willin' to hate his clearin' ag'in a side-hill plough that he seen Simon's Sam an' Shadrack an' Abs'lom Bobentiff drivin' through a deestric' where he were stoppin' fer supper. But o' course that couldn't be, arter what folks at Sugar Swamp know'd, an' Joe had to give in that he must 'a' ben mistook.

"'Witches is cur'ous things, Squire,' concluded

the Old Settler, "an' I'm glad I recomember about Shadrock Bobentiff an' the buckskin breeches ol' Granny Nutslap made him, so's I don't hef to compermise myself in answerin' any p'inted questions."

**THE UNFAILING SIGN OF YELLOW-
LEG CHICKENS.**

THE UNFAILING SIGN OF YELLOW- LEG CHICKENS.

“**W**A ’N’T you a-tellin’ o’ me yiste’d’y, Squire, th’t Dominie Van Slocum had gone to labor fer a spell ’mongst the strayin’ sheep o’ Lost Crow Barren?” asked the Old Settler of the Squire one evening at the tavern.

“Sartainly,” replied the Squire. “Brother Van has gone down there, ’n’ ’tain’t noways likely th’t he’ll perside at any o’ the meetin’s o’ the Sol’s Ridge Clothens o’ the Naked ’n’ Feeders o’ Them th’t Hungers much afore nex’ spring. It’s a good ways f’m here to Lost Crow Barren, Major.”

“That’s so, Squire,” said the Old Settler; “but it seems ez though distance wa’n’t nuthin’ at all to the spreadin’ wings o’ brotherly tenderness ’n’ the soarin’ pinions o’ love fer good fodder. Dominie Van Slocum mebbe wun’t perside at a meetin’ o’ the Clothens ’n’ Feeders ’fore nex’ spring, but he wun’t be at Lost Crow Barren t’morrer, b’gosht’l-mighty!”

"Oh, you pshaw, Major!" exclaimed the 'Squire.
"Why wun't he be there?"

"'Cause he'll be here, b'gosh!" replied the Old Settler."

"Go 'way! Who tol' ye so?"

"Nobody didn't tell me so!"

"It's durn funny how ye know it, then!"

"'Tain't a bit funny, Squire!"

"Well, if nobody hain't tol' ye, I don't see how ye know it, Major!"

"I know it by an onfailin' sign, b'gosh! M'riar went out this arternoon 'n' wrung the necks o' two of our ch'icest yaller-leg chickens, 'n' she's fixin' fer an oncommon big bakin' o' shortcake! That's the way I know it!"

"Puh, Major! If some folks sh'd hear the way yer talkin' they'd say it were an onfailin' sign th't ye was goin' crazy!"

"They would, hay? Wull, who is these some folks? Fetch 'em in here! Fetch 'em in 'n' let 'em hear the way I'm talkin', b'gosh! I want folks to hear me! If it's ez onfailin' a sign th't I'm a-goin' crazy ez it is th't Dominie Van Slocum is gointer be to our house fer dinner t'morrer, then they better be gittin' a straight-jacket ready fer me, fer I'm gointer be the howlinest 'n' yelpinest 'n' rampaginest loonytic,

b'gosht'lmighty, th't ever stood up 'n' hollered glory!"

"But ye know th't all signs fail in time o' drou't, Major, 'n' it's been pooty dry 'round this deestric' fer more'n a coon's age," said the Squire, in conciliatory tones.

"All signs but this'n!" exclaimed the Old Settler, his warmth increasing. "It mowt be so consarned dry th't ev'ry sign th't natur' ever made to steer us by ez we jog along through this vale o' tears 'd pucker up 'n' drop to pieces 'n' be scattered to ev'ry corner o' this crumblin' 'n' cracklin' mundane sp'ere, like a las' year's ches'-nut leaf in a hurricane, but this here sign o' the yaller-leg chickens 'n' the shortcakes 'd come up ez fresh 'n' green 'n' bloomin' ez a johnny-jumpup in an April shower, 'n' be ez onfailin', b'gosht'lmighty, ez fleas on a yaller dog! Th' hain't never no yaller-leg chickens led like a lamb to the slaughter over to our house, 'n' follered by a mixin' o' shortcake enough fer eight, 'nless Brother Van Slocum is comin' to dinner nex' day, 'n' don't y' talk to me 'bout bein' crazy! The sign ain't so onfailin' ez to Sister Bulger 'n' Sister Popover, but if them two onceasin' snatchers o' bran's from the burnin' hain't got an invite, M'riar 'll hear some crushin' remarks at the next meetin'

o' the Feeders 'n' Clothiers on the onpard'n'ble sin
o' selfishness, 'n' the orful dangers th't's layin' iu
wait fer them th't hankers arter the fleshpots, 'n'
keeps the hankerin' hid from them th't's likewise
laborin' in the vineyard 'n' has fried pork fer din-
ner, 'specially w'en them fleshpots is yaller-leg
chicken 'n' shortcake, with thick gravy kiverin'
'em like a tow-tied counterpane, to say nothin' o'
p'served peaches in a scolloped glass dish, 'n' but-
ter on two plates! Jeewhizz! It'll be better fer
M'riar th't she had a millstun 'bout her neck if
this here sign fails ez to Sister Bulger 'n' Sister
Popover! But Brother Van Slocum 'll be there,
'Squire! He's found the sheep strayed pooty bad
over to Lost Crow Barren, 'n' not a yaller-leg chick-
en in the hull deestric'! That's w'at the sign
means over to our house, 'n' if ye sh'd happen to
drop in there t'morrer 'bout one o'clock, Squire,
y'll see me helpin' Brother Van to a wing, 'n' a
leg, 'n' a piece o' the breast, 'n' the second j'int, 'n'
a back, 'n' the piece th't kim over the fence last,
with four shortcakes, 'n' a pint o' gravy, 'n' then
him a-askin' me if I couldn't manage to fish him a
heart 'n' a liver, 'n' mebbe a gizzard outen the
gravy bowl, ez he's powerful fond o' giblets!
That sign fail in time o' droust? Not ez long ez
tha's a yaller-leg chicken in the land, 'n' the

church militant is skirmishin' around 'n' havin' hard sleddin' in this onregen'rit corner o' the footstool, b'gosht'lmighty!"

The Squire seemed hardly satisfied yet, and after thinking over what the Old Settler had been telling him, he said:

"But, say, Major! Brother Van only went to Lost Crow a week ago! He ain't a-comin' all the way back here jist fer to fill up on yaller-legs 'n' biscuit!"

"Ain't he?" said the Old Settler, with a contemptuous curl of his lip. "Then that's ez much ez sayin' th't he ain't a true 'n' giniwine snatcher o' bran's! I kin look back on a line o' brothern th't has fit on the circuits ag'in perverse 'n' stiff-necked ginerations, 'specially in the Sugar Swamp deestric', fer better'n sixty year, from ol' Dominie Skinner down to this here Brother Van Slocum, 'n' tha wa'n't one on 'em but w'at'd travel ten miled outen his way to git to a place where he know'd he k'd buckle on the armor o' shortcake 'n' yaller-leg chicken! W'y, w'at did ol' Dominie Skinner say, the second time he let his lungs loose in Sugar Swamp, 'n' pounded the splinters outen the desk at the red schoolhouse? Folks wa'n't very high livers there in them days, 'n' the ol' dominie 'd ben spendin' pooty nigh a week

around the deestric'. Most ev'rybody were out to hear him. He'd had his dinner at Uncle Gid Groner's, Uncle Gid's folks bein' the piqueest lot tha were around them clearin's. They had the name o' bein' a leetle shy o' dishin' up much in the way o' fodder, even w'en they had comp'ny, 'n' w'at they did dish up, I've heerd folks say, wa'n't no ch'icer th'n the ch'icest. The ol' dominie riz up, 'n started the perceedin's by a few remarks.

"'Brother'n 'n' sistern,' he says, 'I wanter say fust along th't mebbe you folks kin peel bark, 'n' yank out logs, 'n' pick stun, 'n' shoot b'ar, 'n' all setch,' he says, ' 'n' keep a-doin' of it right along, on the kind o' victuals ye seem to hanker arter,' he says. 'Mebbe it's manny in the wildernest, 'n' mebbe it's locus 'n' wild honey, to ye,' he says. 'The chances is th't mebbe I k'd rassel a b'ar or clutch a painter on such fodder jist ez well ez any o' you kin,' he says. 'But I ain't rasselin' b'ar, nor I hain't a-clutchin' painters!' he says. 'Here's earth ag'in yer souls ingaged,' he says, ' 'n' fiery darts a-bein' hurled!' he says. 'W'at kin I do to resky ye from 'em,' he says, 'on pork 'n' slapjacks three times o' day, includin' Sunday? I can't do it, even on corn-fed pork 'n' slapjacks th't's light 'n' has butter on 'em,' he says, 'but w'en it comes to pork fed in the beech, 'n' slap-

jacks th't wouldn't run two to the pound, like I had to-day, brothern 'n' sistern,' he says, 'I'll hef to leave ye to the fiery darts,' he says, 'fer they'll go through my armor as easy, b'gosh, ez ye k'd shoot them slapjacks through a two-inch plank! Brothern 'n' sistern!' he says, lettin' his lungs loose 'n' poundin' like a sledge-hammer on the desk, 'tha's only one thing, 'n' that's this. Unless I git yaller-leg chickens 'n' shortcake least-ways wunst a week,' he says, 'I can't smile at Satan's rage nor face a frownin' world,' he says, 'n' I want that livin' fact to sink inter ye like a b'ar's foot in the mud!'

"An' that's the way it's alluz ben with the brothern, 'n' that's the way it alluz will be with 'em, Squire."

"But," said the Squire, still in an argumentative mood, "w'y do they alluz want yaller-leg chickens? W'y hain't black legs, or blue legs, or red legs, or white legs, jist ez good?"

"I dunno, Squire," replied the Old Settler, shaking his head, "but it's alluz ben yaller legs with 'em. I guess mebbe it's perdistination. I remember th't wunst my poor ol' pap, who were a leetle sot in his ways, but alluz pervided plenty to eat, come nigh makin' a crack in Dominie Skinner's armor th't mowt ha' let a hull passel o' them

fiery darts through. The ol' dominie were a stiff un on for'dination 'n' perdestination, 'n' stuck to it th't ev'rything 'd come to pass jist ez it were sot down from the beginnin'. My ol' pap wa'n't a perdestinator, 'n' him 'n' the dominie usety hev it hammer 'n' tongs. One Sunday the dominie were eatin' dinner at our house, 'n' o' course tha were plenty o' shortcake 'n' chicken. Ez the dominie were puttin' the finishin' tetches on his third plate, my ol' pap says:

"'Dominie,' he says, 'I s'pose ye b'lieve th't it were perdestinated th't ye was to be here a-eatin' yaller-leg chickens fer dinner to-day?' he says.

"'Sartin!' the dominie says. 'Jist ez sartin,' he says, 'ez this here table's a-standin' here!' he says.

"'Well,' my poor ol' pap says, 'I'm durn sorry to knock a piece offen the foundation o' yer doctern,' he says, 'but I'm afeard th't I'll hev to show ye th't perdestination has turned out to be a weary-in' disapp'intment to ye,' he says. 'These hain't yaller-leg chickens, dominie!' he says. 'Their legs was ez black ez crows!' he says.

"'N' so they was, Squire, 'n' ol' Dominie Skinner wouldn't never eat dinner at our house ag'in. But ez to Brother Van Slocum, all tha is to him is th't he's found th't the Lost Crow Barreners don't keep no yaller legs, 'n' if tha's any place in the



"HIM 'N' THE DOMINIE USETY HEV IT HAMMER 'N' TONGS."—Page 142.

country where Satan's rage is waitin' to be smiled at, it's over on Lost Crow. M'riar knows that, 'n' w'en Brother Van goes back to the Barren, if he don't give Satan's rage a smile that'll send it a-skitin' away from them parts with a flea in its ear, then yaller-leg chickens has lost their power, 'n' short cake 'n' gravy mowt ez well hang their harp on the willers, b'gosht-lmighty, 'n' let fiery darts be hurled!"

THE GINGERBREAD HEART.

THE GINGERBREAD HEART.

“**I**T looks to me,” said Uncle Sol, the landlord, “ez if we was gointer hev a green Chris’mas. Hope not! A white Christmas is what we want, an’ the whiter the better. We don’t want no green Chris’mas fixin’ up a fat graveyard around these hills and valleys!”

“You’re right, there, Solomon!” assented the Squire. “Tha hain’t never no good luck comes with a green Christmas. Give us one kivered with snow an’ full o’ blow, an’ nobody needn’t git skeert at the prospec’s.”

The Old Settler took his pipe out of his mouth, snapped his fingers contemptuously, and exclaimed:

“Puh, b’gosh! Fudge an’ fiddlesticks!”

“What fer?” asked the Squire, looking at the Old Settler in amazement.

“What fer! Goshtlmighty! Don’t you remember about Paley Wuncutt?” said the Old Settler.

"Not jist this minute, I don't," replied the Squire.

"Nor little Faithful Pellygraff?"

"Never heerd on her."

"Nor the gingerbread heart?"

"No; but I've heerd o' puddin'heads!"

"Nor little Faithful's wicked uncle?"

"Guess the wicked uncle must 'a' slipped my mind, too, Major."

"Then it hain't no wonder ye ast me, 'What fer?' If ye hain't never heerd o' the luck that were brung to Paley Wuncutt, all along of a green Chris'mas, then I kin 'scuse ye fer astin', 'What fer?' I'll hef to tell ye 'bout Paley; an' if ye don't 'gree with me then on the fudge an' fiddlesticks question, then tha hain't no use o' argyin' with ye.

"Paley Wuncutt were an ancistor o' mine, an' he lived in Sugar Swamp. Up to the time he were 15 year old he were an orfint on his father's side, an' though ev'ry Chris'mas that had slid by him, Squire, were a white un, he hadn't never had ez much ez a cruller in his stockin'. No, sir, b'gosh! Not ez much ez a red apple! But he were head over heels in love with little Faithful Pellygraff, an' so she were with Paley, so Paley didn't keer nuthin' fer crullers nor red apples nor nuthin'

else. Little Faithful were an orfint on both her father's and her mother's side, but she had a rich uncle livin' some'rs 'way down the river, an' what does he do, 'long about that time, but send fer her to come an' live with him, an' tha wa'n't nuthin' for her to do but to go. 'Fore she went, though, she baked a big gingerbread heart an' give it to Paley, 'cause it were Chris'mas—an' that un were a green Chris'mas, Squire, come to think on it! She had writ on the heart, in sugar frostin', 'If you love me ez I love you, no knife can't cut our love in two.' Paley told little Faithful, b'gosh, that tha wa'n't no doubt about it, not if the knife were ez big ez a scythe an' ten times ez sharp.

"Not long arter little Faithful went away, Paley's mammy died, an' left him the clearin'. Ev'ry Chris'mas that kim along arter that were a white 'un, but somehow Paley's cattle wouldn't raise, an' if the b'ars lugged off any pigs in the deestric' they was alluz his'n, an' if the sniffles kim that way lookin' fer sheep it were alluz his sheep that took 'em in an' sniffled 'emselves to death. An' so things went on from bad to wuss with Paley. He got to be 'long to'rds twenty year old, an' begun to think that the best thing he could do were to pull up sticks an' leave fer some'rs

where luck mowtn't keep goin' ag'in him all the time.

"'Long about then a little sharp-faced ol' man, that looked ez if the wind wouldn't hef to puff very hard to blow him away, came inter the Sugar Swamp deestric' an' bought a spooky sort of a clearin', 'way off from most ev'rybody. The man's name were Isra'l Coldfit, an' the way he dickered in buyin' the clearin' sot him down ez bein' a chap ez'd pinch a penny till he'd give the woman on it corns. An' who d'yes'pose he turned out to be? Nobody, b'gosh, but little Faithful Pollygraff's rich uncle! An' he moved onter the clearin', an' little Faithful kim with him. Folks wa'n't long in findin' out that ol' Isra'l Coldfit were about ez mean an' sneakin' a passel o' human git-up ez ever was got up, an' ev'rybody said that they wouldn't want him to hev a gredge ag'in 'em an' then meet him in the dark.

"More'n that, it wa'n't long in gittin' 'round the deestric' that ol' Isra'l Coldfit were a reg'lar miser that ye read about in books, an' that he spent most o' his time countin' an' gloatin' over a pile o' money that he kep' in a leather bag. An' mebbe he didn't keep little Faithful close! An' ev'rybody said, 'Wa'n't that a nice kind of a relation fer her to be livin' with, back on that spooky

ol' clearin'?' Lippy Conkright, who arterw'ds got to be the best hoss docter tha were in all that deestric', were the only one that ever see much o' the folks at the Coldfit clearin' long at first, ez he were choppin' out logs not fur from Coldfit's, an' the ol' man usety git him now an' then to do chores fer him round his clearin'. But Lippy were a close-mouthed an' sly sort o' chap, an' he never let on to nobody what he seen or heerd there, not till arter some amazin' things had happened.

"Now, when ol' Isra'l Coldfit an' little Faithful Pellygraff kim inter the deestric' Paley Wuncutt were 'bout makin' up his mind to shake the dust o' Sugar Swamp offen his moc'sins, an' pull for pastur's that mowt feed him better, but the comin' o' little Faithful kinder discomfuddled him, an' he sot right down ag'in on his clearin' an' thort he'd wait a spell. One day he laid for Lippy Conkright, an' says to him:

"'How does she look?' says he.

"'Who?' says Lippy.

"'Why, little Faithful, o' course!' says Paley.

"'Oh!' says Lippy. 'She's ez purty ez a red wagon, but she hain't very chipper.'

"Then Paley sot down an' writ to little Faithful an' says: 'Ye 'member the gingerbread heart, don't ye?' An' he give the letter to Lippy, an'

Lippy took it to little Faithful, an' she writ back to Paley: 'Course I do. Was it good?' an' Paley writ back an' says, 'I hain't never tasted of it yit, but I'm wearin' it on my chist in a tin case.' That were so tetchin' like that little Faithful writ back an' says, 'Tha hain't no knife ever cut mine in two yit.' An' Paley answered the letter an' says, 'Mine nuther.' Then little Faithful writ an' says, 'I'll stick to ye.' But she said her uncle were queer an' they'd hef to wait.

"So Paley thort the best thing he could do were to keep the dust o' Sugar Swamp on his feet an' wait. But, ez luck would hev it, ol' Isra'l dis-kivered that Paley were little Faithful's ol'-time sweetheart, an' that she were stickin' to him, an' from all I kin hear about it he jist more'n tore things up around that clearin', and stopped that letter-writin' so suddent that it made both o' them onfortinit young folks's head swim. But Paley stayed and waited.

"Chris'mas come, an' it were a white un an' no mistake. It was snowin' an' blowin' sumpin' orful to see. Now tha was a wuthless young chap named Pete Cubly lived in Sugar Swamp, an' when him an' Paley was boys he tried to shine up to little Faithful Pellygraff, an' Paley give him setch a lickin' that he hardly know'd hisself fer a

month. Ever sence then he hadn't never had much to say to Paley; an' so when Paley see Pete come to his clearin' 'long in the arternoon o' this Chris'mas day he were all took back.

"'Here's a letter fer ye,' says Pete. 'Lippy is sick an' give it to me to bring to ye.'

"Then Pete went away. Paley opened the letter an' it made him jump, fer the letter said: 'Things is gittin' too hot fer me here. Meet me at the holler ches'nut tree at 7 to-night, an' we'll cut sticks outen this,' an' it were signed 'Faithful.' Paley didn't know wuther he were on his heels or his head, an' he couldn't hardly wait till it were time to start. The holler ches'nut were a miled from the Coldfit clearin', an' when Paley had got in the thick woods a half miled from the holler ches'nut, all of a suddent tha come a flash an' a bang. Sumpin' plunked ag'in Paley's chist, an' down he went in the snow.

"He knowed he'd ben shot, an' by the flash o' the gun he see who it were that had shot him. It were ol' Isra'l Coldfit! It didn't take Paley ten seconds to find out that he wa'n't killed, an' he jumped up an' clapped his hand to his chist. An' why wa'n't he killed? 'Cause ol' Israel's bullet had plunked ag'in the tin case where Paley carried little Faithful's gingerbread heart, an' it couldn't

go no funder. Soon ez Paley found he were alive he scooted arter ol' Israel to git his clutches on him, but the snow had kivered his tracks ez fast ez he had made 'em, an' Paley couldn't foller 'em.

"Then Paley made fer the holler ches'nut ez fast ez his legs could carry him. He found the tree, but no little Faithful. He waited a few minutes, an' then tore fer the Coldfit clearin'. When he got there ev'rything about the ol' house were darker'n Egypt. Then he know'd sumpin' were wrong. He tore back to the settlement an' sot ev'rybody wild when he told what had happened. Lippy Conkright were at the tavern.

"'I never give Pete Cubly no letter fer Paley!' says Lippy. 'But I seen ol' Isra'l give him one to-day! An' now I come to think on it,' says Lippy, 'I seen ol' Isra'l through the winder one night a-countin' his money, an' a-hearin' him say, 'An' it's all her'n if she gits married! It's all her'n if she gits married! But she ain't a goin' ter git married! Not if I know it, she ain't!' An' I recomember, now, come to think on it,' says Lippy, 'o' hearin' ol' Isra'l talkin' to little Faithful one night, and he says:

"'So you won't marry nobody but this Paley Wuncutt, hay?' says he.

"'Not ez fur ez heerd from, I won't!' says she.

““But s’posin’ he dies?” says he.

“‘Then little Faithful larfed an’ says: “No danger! Paley’s tougher’n pine knots!” says she.

““But s’posin’ he gits killed?” says he.

““Then I’ll be a perpetchal widder from Alphy to Omegar!” says she.

“‘Then,’ says Lippy, ‘ol’ Isra’l went away grinnin’ like a hyeny, an’ I heerd him say: “Setch bein’ the case, tha’s a perpetchal widder in this fam’ly, an’ the money’s mine!” ’

“Then ev’rything were ez plain ez the nose on yer face, Squire, an’ it’d gone tough with ol’ Isra’l if anybody could ‘a’ got their hands on him. But they couldn’t, an’ they couldn’t git no track o’ little Faithful. So Paley packs up next day an’ goes a wanderin’. If he’d only waited a day longer he’d ‘a’ saved hissself a good deal o’ trouble, for what does little Faithful do but come back to Sugar Swamp, an’ she had blood in her eye.

“‘Somebody’s ben a-foolin’ o’ me!’ says she. ‘Where’s Paley Wuncutt?’

“O’ course, nobody know’d jist where Paley were about that time.

“‘Where’s Uncle Isra’l Coldfit?’ says she.

“‘We’ll give ye a leetle sumpin’,’ says they, ‘if ye’ll p’int him out to us yerself,’ says they.

“‘Where’s Pete Cubly?’ says she.’

"When they come to think on it nobody hadn't see Pete durin' the hull o' the rampage that'd been goin' on. Then they up an' told her all that had happened, an' she sot down an' bellered, an' says:

"'I know'd somebody'd ben foolin' me! It were Uncle Isra'l an' Pete Cubly!' she says. 'When Paley comes back, tell him he'll find me at the Coldfit clearin'.'

"But Paley didn't come back; not jist then, anyhow. The nex' Chris'mas kim around, an' mebbe it wa'n't a green un, Squire! Even the ba'rs was outen their holes yit, it were so green an' open. It were so nice that little Faithful put on her things an' says:

"'I guess I'll take a walk,' says she.

"Now it happened that Paley Wuncutt had got kind o' tired' o' wanderin', an' twixt me an' you, Squire, were findin' it a pooty tough job to git fodder. So he says to hisself, a little while 'fore Chris'mas:

"'Tha's wuss places than Sugar Swamp!' he says. 'I guess I'll go back an' weed out the ol' clearin'.'

"Long in the arternoon o' Chris'mas day he were trudgin' along, when all of a suddent he looked up and says:

“‘Great Cæsar’s Ghost!’ says he. ‘Here’s the holler ches’nut!’

“Sure enough, there he were, clus to the holler ches’nut, right on the edge o’ Sugar Swamp! He sot down, an’ natur’ly took to thinkin’, an’ o’ course pulled the tin case from where he had it on his chist. He took little Faithful’s gingerbread heart outen’ the case an’ looked at it. By an’ by he laid it down an’ thunk more ’n’ more. While he were thinkin’ he heerd a noise, an’ lookin’ up he see a b’ar that had snuck up to the spot, grab the gingerbread heart an’ slide away with it!

“‘Mortal man!’ says Paley. ‘I’ve carried that gingerbread heart on my chist all these here years, an’ there goes a durn pig-stealin’ b’ar off with it to make a meal on!’

“Paley took arter the b’ar. The b’ar run inter the holler ches’nut. Paley run ag’in the tree an’ give it an all-sendin’ kick to skeer the b’ar out so’s he could clutch it an’ git back his gingerbread heart, when, lo an’ behold ye! over went the holler old tree an’ tumbled onter the ground in a hundred pieces!

“The b’ar tumbled ’long with the rotten ol’ stub, an’ jumpin’ to his feet, seen the same thing that Paley were starin’ at with his eyes hangin’ out like seed onions. Then the b’ar dropped the

gingerbread heart, an' givin' a yell like a skeert Injin, tore for the woods like a hurricane. Ez Paley stood there, starin' an' turnin' cold, he heerd a scream, an' some one hollered:

"'Paley!"

"The next second little Faithful Pellygraff were in his arms, an' fainted dead away. But she didn't stay fainted long, b'gosh, an' there she stood, starin' along with Paley. An' what d'ye s'pose they was starin' at, Squire? A skeleton! Yes, sir! A man's skeleton! An' by its side were a big leather bag.

"'It's Uncle Isra'l, ez sure ez scissors!' says little Faithful.

"An' so it were, with the bag full o' money that were little Faithful's ez soon ez she were married! Did she git married, think? Wull, ruther, an' that very day, too, b'gosht'lmighty, an' she wa'n't little Faithful no more, but Mrs. Paley Wuncutt till the day she were called over Jurdan!

"An' that were the greenest Chris'mas, Squire, ever heerd on. Do ye 'gree with me ez to fudge an' fiddlesticks, or shell I drink alone?"

The Old Settler didn't drink alone, and the landlord joined them.

"Here's to a merry Chris'mas, anyhow," said he, "wuther it's a white un or green un."

HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS.

HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS.

“GRAN’POP,” said little Peleg, “I wisht Christmas’d come on Monday every year.”

“Do ye, sonny?” asked the Old Settler. “What’d be the p’tic’lar p’int in Chris’mas a doin’ o’ that, now?”

“Why, you know, gran’pop,” said Peleg.

“Peleg!” exclaimed the Old Settler. “You’ve took to ’sinniwatin’ ag’in’!”

“No, I hain’t, gran’pop!”

“An ’now ye’v’ took to conterdictin’. An’ arter all the times I’ve warned ye ag’in ’em! Boys that ’sinniwates an’ conterdicts ’ll hev a hard row to hoe ez they meander forrid an’ to an’ fro’ an’ here an’ there through the t’restial sp’ere o’ this wicked world, an’ ’ll more’n likely hev a sweatin’ time when they pass over Jurdan an’ try to continue their meanderin’s through the s’lestial sp’ere o’ t’other world, ’specially if it’s their gran’pap. Do ye know what’d ’a’ overtook me when I were a boy, if I’d ’a’ ’sinniwated an’ conterdicted my gran’pap? The orful hand o’ jestice,

with a strap in it, would 'a' overtook me, b'gosh, an' ye could a-heerd me fer half a miled a-liftin' up my voice an' weepin' an' wailin', an' mebbe a-gnashin' o' teeth, an' my settin'-down places wouldn't 'a' know'd me no more fer a week, unless my mammy snuck around an' kinder put a downy piller on 'em! That's what'd 'a' overtook me, my son, if I'd 'a' sot an' 'sinniwated an' conterdicted my gran'pap when I were a little boy. Sinniwation is the thief o' time, Peleg, an' conterdictin' is wuss'n a dinner o' yarbs on the housetop while yer neighbor is chawin' a stalled ox in the kitchen!"

Peleg, who had started in with cheerfulness, had become much depressed under this severe lecture of his grandfather, and he whined a little when he asked:

"Now, how did I 'sinate, gran'pop?"

"Didn't I ast ye what'd be the p'int in Christmas comin' ev'ry year on Monday?" said the Old Settler.

"Yes, sir," said Peleg.

"An' didn't ye up an' say that I know'd?"

"Yes, gran'pop, but——"

"Wull, wa'n't that 'sinniwatin'? That were a cold 'sinniwation that I know'd all the time what that p'int were, an' were lettin' on that I

didn't! Don't do it ag'in, sonny, fer, ez my poor ol' pap usety say, it's better to hev a sarpint's tooth than to be a thankless child. Now, then, Peleg, what'd be th p'tic'lar p'int in Chris'mas comin' on Monday ev'ry year?"

"Why," said Peleg, his cheerfulness restored, "'cause that'd be three days hand-runnin', year in an' year out, when school didn't go in!"

The Old Settler puffed at his pipe in thoughtful silence for a while, and then said:

"If wishes was hosses, sonny, beggars could ride. But that ain't nuther here nor there. Tha ain't nuthin' that don't git tired wunst in a while, an' I don't see why eddication hain't got jist ez good a right to hev the boneache an' git stiff in the j'intz ez anything else has. So while yer 'bout it, Peleg, why don't ye wisht that Chris'mas'd come on Monday ev'ry year, an' New Year's drop in the follerin' Tuesday, an' Washin'ton's Birthday come along on We'n'sday, an' Fourth o' July bang away an' yoop on Thursday, an' Thanksgivin' wind the percession up on Friday? That'd give eddication a chance to ketch her breath an' grease her bones an' limber up her j'intz amazin'. If I was you, sonny, when I wished fer sumpin' I'd wish fer sumpin' wuth while, b'gosh!"

The look on Peleg's face expressed more than

words could how entirely blissful such a week's combination of holidays would be, but presently it was shaded by a doubt that came into his mind.

"That'd be a bully wish, gran'pop," said he, "all except the Fourth o' July. It wouldn't do to have that with the rest of 'em."

"What'd be the matter with it, sonny?" asked the Old Settler.

"Why, gran'pop," said Peleg, "it'd spoil the rabbit trackin' and the ridin' down hill and the skatin'."

"But it'd fetch swimmin' and trout fishin', wouldn't it?" said the Old Settler. "Can't eddication rest her weary bones a trout fishin' an 'swimmin' jist as well as she kin a rabbit trackin' or a ridin' down hill or a skatin'?"

Here was a combination of contrary pleasures that was too tantalizing for further contemplation on Peleg's part, and, with a sigh, he abandoned further thought on the subject. There was silence in the kitchen for a time, and then Peleg started in on a new vein:

"Did you ever track rabbits when you was a boy, gran'pop?" he asked.

"Natur'ly, natur'ly," replied the Old Settler. "I were born on the 19th day o' Janiwerry, an'

the very next Chris'mas follerin' I went out rabbit trackin'."

"Why, gran'pop," said Peleg, opening his eyes, "you wasn't a year old yet."

"I'm glad to see ye so quick at figgers, sonny!" said the Old Settler, nodding his head approvingly. "Ye ciphered that up all in yer head, and the answer is right. I couldn't 'a' done it no better myself. Yes, Peleg, I were lackin' consid'able o' bein' 'a year old yit, but I went out rabbit-trackin' that fust Christ'mas o' mine, an' the way I done that trackin' made my ol' pap so proud that he couldn't hardly git over it.

"'Why!' says he. 'The young un is durn nigh ez good ez a houn' pup!' says he.

"My pap know'd a good thing when he seen it, sonny. He were a remark'ble man. Jist think of it, sonny! If he were livin' to-day he'd be 109 year old! Now, here's Uncle Ben Gubson. He's a livin', an' folks thinks he's a wonder; an' yit he's only 92! What'd he be if my pap were livin'? Huh! Nothin' mor'n a youngster, b'gosh! Remark'ble man my ol' pap were, sonny! 'Specially when ye come to think how many folks there is dead that wouldn't begin to be noways nigh 109 year old if they was livin'! Remark'ble man, my ol' pap were!"

"Did you ketch the rabbit, gran'pop?" asked Peleg, more interested in that than he was in the remarkable character of his ancestor.

"Wull, Peleg," replied the Old Settler, "lookin' back to that first Chris'mas o' mine, an' recomemberin' of it better'n I do any o' the six or seven dozent o' Chris'mases that has come an' gone sence that un, I don't hes'tate not the shake of a lamb's tail to say, open an' above board, that I ketched it.

"I recomember gittin' up bright an' 'arly that Chris'mas, sonny, an' toddlin' over to the chimbley jam to see what ol' Sinder Claws had put in my stockin'. I'd been hopin' it'd be a gun, but Sinder Claws didn't seem to hev know'd that I were a young un so chuck full o' p'intz ez all that, an' so all he stuffed in my stockin' were a couple o' crullers an' an apple an' three sticks of yaller 'lasses candy. Pap were out feedin' the hogs, an' mammy were out milkin' the cow. I got up to the kitchen winder, an' lookin' out I see a rabbit track in the snow, goin' straight fer the top o' the hill. I were feelin' a leetle glumpy over the way Sinder Claws had sized me up, an' so when I see that rabbit track I says:

"'Wull,' I says, 'mebbe I kin hev a merry Chris'mas arter all,' I says.

“An’ a-sayin’ o’ which, I snuck outen the house, an’ long ’fore anybody know’d it I were half a miled away, follerin’ that rabbit like a houn’ on the tiger’s track. Jist arter I got away I diskiver’d that I had them three sticks o’ ’lasses candy in my hand. At fust I were gointer throw ’em away, but then I happened to think, young-un like, that mebbe they’d taste good by an’ by, an’ so I stuck ’em in my clo’es.

“Well, sir, Peleg, I follered that rabbit a miled, an’ then kim to where it had crep’ in under a big root. I wa’n’t long a-pullin’ of it out an’ killin’ of it, an’ were on the p’int o’ toddlin’ back home with it, when I looked up an’ see sumpin’ that riled me. When my mammy had gone out to milk an’ pap to feed the hogs that mornin’, sonny, it were ’fore I had got outen bed yit, so when they got back to the house they didn’t think nothin’ o’ not seein’ me ’round. But when breakfast were ready an’ mammy went to hustle me out an’ I wa’n’t there to be hustled, her an’ pap went to tearin’ ’round like a hen with its head off. Pooty soon mammy seen my tracks in the snow.

“‘Gulliver Giles!’ she hollered. Gulliver were my pap’s given name, sonny, an’ when mammy hollered it pap wa’n’t never long a-comin’. ‘Gul-

liver!' she hollers. 'That oncommon young un has gone out a rabbit-trackin'!'

"Pap he kim a-runnin' to where mammy was, an' sure enough, there was my tracks.

"'Gosht'lmighty!' say he. 'He's arter that rabbit ez sure ez pine knots!' says he, 'an' if he ever ketches up to it, an' it gives him one kick,' say he, 'that young un's a goner!' says he.

"An' so they both started on my trail hot-foot. Wull, ez I were sayin', Peleg, jist ez I were on the p'int o' startin' home with my rabbit I looked up an' see sumpin' that riled me. I hadn't never seen nothin' like it afore, but I know'd to wunst that it were a b'ar.

"'Now,' says I, 'this here is too bad! Arter I've follered this rabbit fer a miled an' better an' ketched it,' I says, 'here oomes this snoopin' b'ar to take it away from me! This is tough!' I says, 'an' my merry Chris'mas is gointer be sp'iled!'

"The b'ar wa'n't more'n twenty foot away, an' the closer it kim the madder I got over the idee that I'd hef to hand the rabbit over to it, when all of a suddent I thort o' sumpin'.

"'Mebbe b'ars has a sweet tooth!' says I. 'If they hev,' says I, 'this here Chris'mas 'll be merrier than I had laid out fer it to be!' says I.

"So when the b'ar kim up an' were jist goin'

ter reach out an' take my rabbit, I took out one o' the sticks o' 'lasses candy, an' bitin' off a chunk handed it to the b'ar. The way the b'ar took that chunk o' 'lasses candy an' chawed it an' looked tickled half to death, I know'd tha wa'n't no doubt ez to b'ars havin' a sweet tooth.

"'Now,' says I, 'if this here 'lasses candy holds out,' says I, 'I'll save the rabbit, an' this Chris-mas 'll be merrier than a barn-raisin' where the jug holds two gallon!' says I.

"So I toddles fer home, takin' a short cut. The b'ar follered right along, an' I kep' a-bitin' off hunks o' candy an' feedin' of 'em to it. Fast ez it'd gollup one hunk it'd nose up arter another un, an' fust thing I know'd an' the b'ar know'd I had baited the b'ar clear to our clearin', an' snug an' fast inter the woodshed, b'gosh, an' shet it in. But I wanter say, though, that if Sinder Claws had stuck only two sticks o' 'lasses candy in my stockin' I couldn't 'a' done it, fer it were the last chunk offen them three sticks that took the bar inter the woodshed.

"Wull, Peleg, my poor ol' pap an' mammy tore all along my trail till they come to where I had snaked out the rabbit an' killed it an' were jined by the b'ar. Then they tore back over my trail an' the b'ar's, an' when they kim a-bustin' inter

the house, about ten minutes arter I got in, I were settin' at the table stowin' away breakfast like a hired man.

"'Merry Chris'mas!' says I ez they busted in. 'I got the rabbit!' says I. 'An' you tell Sinder Claws when ye see him,' says I, 'that if he'd a left me a gun I wouldn't 'a' had to waste all that 'lasses candy on a b'ar!' says I."

The Old Settler puffed out a cloud of smoke, and gazed through it at his grandson, who was apparently thinking something about this tale of his grandfather. By and by Peleg gave his head a little shake.

"But, gran'pop," said he, "you wasn't a year old yet, and it don't seem as if——"

"Tut, tut!" interrupted the Old Settler. "Yer gointer sinniwate ag'in, sonny. Don't ye do it, 'cause Chris'mas 'll be here in a day or two, an' if tha's anything that Sinder Claws don't like it's a boy that 'sinniwates!"

**THE WIDOW PUDGE CRACK CLEAR
ING.**

THE WIDOW PUDGE CRACK CLEARING.

“SPEAKIN’ o’ the summer bein’ past an’ the harvest bein’ ended alluz puts me in mind o’ the story o’ the Widder Pudgcrack an’ the harvest on her clearin’, ez my uncle, Snebecker Giles, usety tell it. It all happened in the Wild Gander Ridge deestric’, fer I don’t think tha was a man in the hull o’ the Sugar Swamp deestric’ ez could ‘a’ had the heart to do w’at Shadrack Biff o’ Wild Gander done, an’ tha was men in Sugar Swamp mean enough, b’gosh, to pass lead sixpences on a blind fiddler at a dance, an’ one of ‘em were Tobin Tidfit, which I hadn’t orter say, I don’t s’pose, Squire, bein’ he were a relation o’ your’n: but facts is facts.”

The Old Settler paused to see how this little reference affected the Squire, and he seemed disappointed when the Squire said:

“That’s so. He were meaner than cow-itch, Uncle Tobin were.”

“But he had his good p’int,” said the Old Set-

tlar. "He know'd which dimmyjohn had the best stuff in it."

"That runs in the fam'ly, Major," said the Squire, smiling again.

"An' he never dranked alone," said the Old Settler. "That don't run in the fam'ly."

"That's onfort'nit for you, Major," said the Squire, with a still broader smile.

The Old Settler looked hard at the Squire for a while, but let the subject of Tobin Tidfit drop and went on with the story of the Widow Pudgcrack's clearing.

"My uncle, Snebecker Giles, were goin' through the Wild Gander Ridge deestric' 'long late in December, wunst, sellin' medicine fer sniffles in sheep, an' he kim to a clearin' where tha were a slommickin' great big chap sot out on the woodpile skinnin' mushrats. Uncle Snebecker pulled up his hoss an' hollers out to the chap:

"'Hullo, neighbor! What clearin' is this?'

"'The Widder Pudgcrack clearin',' says the chap, keepin' on with his mushrat skinnin'.

"'Is the widder in?' says Uncle Snebecker.

"'Wull, ruther!' says the chap, larfin' like a hyeny. 'She's ben in these two weeks—way in,' he says.

"Uncle Snebecker didn't know e'zactly w'at to make outen this, but he says:

"'Kin I see the widder, think?'

"'Wull,' says the chap, larfin ag'in, 'not jist now; but if yer a good, stiff Hardshell Baptis' an' don't backslide, the chances is that ye'll run ag'in her one o' these days,' he says.

"Uncle Snebecker begun to git mad now, an' he says, pooty loud:

"'See here!' he says. 'If ye think ye kin pick me up fer a consarned idjit yer barkin' up the wrong tree for coons! What's the reason I can't see the widder now?'

"'Wull,' says the chap, larfin' more'n ever, 'I dunno why ye can't, less it's 'cause the widder's dead!'

"Then the chap went on skinnin' his mushrats, an' Uncle Snebecker were goin' on his way, w'en the chap hollers to him an' says:

"'Guess ye don't know about the Widder Pudge-crack, do ye?' he says.

"Uncle Snebecker said he didn't.

"'Wull,' says the chap, 'ye mustn't go 'way without hearin' 'bout the widder,' says he. 'It'll be wuth yer while.'

"So Uncle Snebecker stayed to hear about the widder.

“‘A year ago now,’ says the chap, ‘this wa’n’t the Widder Pudgcrack clearin’, ’cause tha wa’n’t no Widder Pudgcrack then, an’ tha wa’n’t no clearin’. The Widder Pudgcrack then were jist plain Tabithy Ann Flint, ez teached the Wild Gander deestric’ school. Tabithy Ann were gittin’ to’rds the time w’en it wa’n’t no trick at all fer her to recomember back fer forty year an’ better, an’ the chances was that she’d be Tabithy Ann Flint when she passed over Jurdan. But Sampson Pudgcrack kim along about then, an’, thinkin’ that Tabithy Ann mowt be a savin’ sort of a wife to tie to, he ast her, an’ Tabithy Ann didn’t waste her time a-sayin’ no. Sampson he bought this here land an’ put up that air cabin yender, an’ him an’ Tabithy Ann sot down in it. Sampson he buckled in like a house afire an’ cleared off the brush, an’ by the time the snow went off he had a clearin’ that nobody could sneeze at. He sowed it to rye, an’ he ploughed it fer ’taters, an’ left room fer corn an’ buckwhit an’ setch.

“‘Jist ez Sampson got things in that kind o’ shipshape he were onconsid’rit enough to leave Tabithy Ann a widder with all that clearin’ an’ things on her hands. It wa’n’t jist the thing fer Sampson to do, an’ when ’tater-plantin’ time an’ corn-plantin’ time kim round sumpin’ had to be

did. Tha had to be somebody to tend to them things, an' so the Widder Pudgecrack done the bes' thing she could, an' married Balaam Bubb. Balaam he pitched in an' got in the corn an' taters', an' made the garden, an' sowed the buckwhit, an' got a pig to fatten, an' things was movin' nicest kind. Balaam cut the rye an' the hay an' got it in, an' then w'at did he do but foller Sampson an' leave the Widder Pudgecrack clearin' without no head ag'in.

"'This were hard on the widder. Course the rye were cut an' the hay were in an' the 'taters an' corn an' buckwhit was planted, but what o' that? The 'taters had to be dug, the corn had to be cut, an' the buckwhit harvested and thrashed. Somebody had to do that. So the widder didn't raise no objections w'en Job Saprider said he'd be willin' to do that for her, an' she changed her name to Saprider. Job were a snorter to work, an' he kep' things a-runnin' right up to the handle. He dug the 'taters an' got em in, an' cut the buckwhit an' thrashed it, an' gathered the corn an' shelled it, and got in the garden truck and stowed everything all away snug an' proper, to enjoy it durin' the winter. But Job didn't hev no better jedgment than Sampson and Balaam had, an' w'at does he do but go an' leave the widder a

widder a'gin, an' she jist a-ca'c'latin' her pootiest on havin' somebody to cheer her up w'en the winter winds begun to beller!

"“This is tough on me!” says the widder; “this is pooty tough!”

“‘Job had stayed long enough to git the pig good an’ fat, and if he’d waited a week or so he could ‘a’ killed it fer the widder, but he didn’t, an’ so she had to git it killed, an’ cut up, an’ packed away in the celler herself. But winter were comin’, an’ she were lonesome, an’ so, ‘long about Thanksgivin’ time, w’en ‘Shellum Biff, that druv team fer the tan’ry, took pity on the widder an’ tol’ her that she needn’t pine, ‘cause he’d make it a p’int to cheer her up, she were so thankful to him that she said yes, an’ she quit bein’ the Widder Saprider an’ begun bein’ Mrs. ‘Shellum Biff. But her joy were too suddent, I guess, fer two weeks ago she quit bein’ a widder or anything else in this vale o’ tears. I think,’ says this mushrat-skinmin’ chap to my uncle Snebecker, ‘that I tol’ ye awhile ago that she were in, didn’t I? An’ that ye mowt run ag’in her one o’ these days if ye were a good, stiff Hardshell Baptis’ an’ didn’t backslide? Wull, that’s where she is.

“‘An’ w’at did the widder do but leave to ‘Shellum all that clearin’, an’ all the rye that

Sampson Pudgcrack sowed, an' all the 'taters an' corn an' buckwhit an' garden truck that Balaam Bubb planted, an' that Job Saprider gethered an' thrashed an' stowed away so snug, an' the pig that Job fattened, an' that the widder packed away in the cellar, all fer 'Shellum to jist lay to this winter an' injoy an' feel good over! An' w'at do ye s'pose 'Shellum's gointer do nex' week? Why, he's gointer git hitched to the snappy little Widder Bly o' Lost Crow Barren, an' jist set her down on the Widder Pudgcrack's clearin' to help him injoy them blessin's! Now w'at do ye think o' 'Shellum Biff?' says the mushrat-skinning chap, larfin like a hyeny ag'in.

"'I think he orter be tarred an' feathered an' rid outen the kentry on a rail!' says my Uncle Snebecker. 'An' I'd like to be the one to do it, b'gosh!' says he.

"'No!' says the chap, droppin' his mushrats. 'Wull,' says he, 'I'm 'Shellum Biff!'

"I tell ye' Squire, it's a durn good thing fer that mushrat-skinning hyeny that my Uncle Snebecker didn't hev no tar an' feathers with him. Ez it were, he shook the dust o' the Widder Pudgcrack's clearin' offen his feet an' got away from it ez fast ez his hoss'd let him, he were so consarned disgusted with 'Shellum Biff!'"

**WHY BILL FIDDLER MISSED THE
STONE FROLIC.**

WHY BILL FIDDLER MISSED THE STONE FROLIC.

“I DIDN’T see Bill Fiddler down to Bingmuster’s stun frolic t’other day, Major,” said the Squire. “Wonder w’at were up with him?”

“Too much bush,” replied the Old Settler.

“Huh?” exclaimed the Squire, the Old Settler’s reply having been unintelligible to him.

“Too much bush,” the Old Settler repeated.

“Oh-h-h!” ejaculated the Squire. “I’m ’bleeged to ye for tellin’ me, an’ I know jist ez much ’bout it now ez I did afore.”

“That’s ’cause ye wa’n’t born an’ riz in the Sugar Swamp deestric’,” said the Old Settler. “That were unfort’nit for ye, Squire, but o’ course I ain’t to blame fer it. If yer ancistors had only settled down onter the teemin’ sile o’ Sugar Swamp ’stid o’ squattin’ ’mongst the stun an’ scrub oaks o’ Blarin’ Ridge, ye’d ’a’ had a chance to see things an’ to l’arn things that’d be a comfort an’ a blessin’ to ye now, an’ I wouldn’t be obleeged to think ’way back inter Injin hist’ry

to git the fac's to 'splain to ye 'bout w'at too much bush stan's fer. I—"

"Ye needn't think back!" exclaimed the Squire. "Bill Fiddler wa'n't to Bingmuster's stun frolic, an' I missed him, but if ye've got to go 'way back an' fish up a chapter in the hist'ry o' the Injins o' this kentry to tell me w'y Bill wa'n't to the stun frolic, I'll 'scuse ye! I don't keer a durn 'bout knowin' anyhow, an' I don't want ye to strain yer mem'ry. I'd willin'er be igner'nt."

"Course ye would!" said the Old Settler. "That's the Blarin' Ridge of it! But s'posin' ye do want to live an' die in igner'nce? S'posin' ye don't want me to strain my mem'ry? Who be you? An' who be I? We ain't the unly folks ez is livin', nor we ain't the unly folks ez is goin' ter be a-livin'! Thuz setch a thing ez childern an' childern's childern, ain't th'? W'at be we gointer do with them? Mebbe you don't keer to know w'at too much bush stan's fer, an' mebbe it's gointer be a strain on me if I post ye on it. But s'pose our childern's childern rises up an' asts, 'What's too much bush?' Who's a-gointer tell 'em? Nobody, b'gosh, if folks was like you, an' was willin' to be igner'nt! An' they'd hef to grow up an' pass away 'thout knowin' no more 'bout it th'n the present gin'ration knows 'bout

the man ez struck Billy Patterson. But our children an' our children's children ain't agointer grow up an' pass away in igner'nce, ez long ez thuz a spark o' the ol' Sugar Swamp sperrit ticklin' o' my veins! It ain't no easy job fer me to throw my memr'y back a hunderd year an' better, Squire, that's so; an' I'm 'bleeged to ye fer not wantin' me to strain it. But gin'rations yit a comin' mus' be looked arter, an' w'en duty calls me I'll foller, if I hef to put my mem'ry t'gether like a j'inted fish-pole, b'gosh, an' throw it back to Noar's ark!"

"An' ye k'd do it, too!" exclaimed the Squire.

"Wuther I could or not ain't nuther here nor there!" said the Old Settler. "But I kin 'member w'at too much bush stan's fer, ez it were handed down to me straight ez ash saplin's, an' which is a part o' the hist'ry o' Sugar Swamp that I ain't a-gointer let run out. If it's gointer spile yer record fer igner'nce, Squire, it's gittin' 'long to'rds yer bed-time, anyhow, an' ye mowt treat yerself an' run home."

"Two words fer yerself an' one fer me, Major," said the Squire. "But I ain't takin' no hints this evenin'. An' now, ez to Bill Fiddler not bein' to the stun frolic. S'pose ye go on an' tell

us how it were. I kin stan' it if yer mem'ry kin."

"Th' wa'n't no Injins ever lived 'roun' Blarin' Ridge," the Old Settler began, "fer it were a leetle too wuthless a neighborhood fer even Injins to hanker arter. But w'en the fust w'ite folks begun to make clearin's in the Sugar Swamp deestric', they foun' that kentry jist more'n a fav'rit campin' groun' an' huntin' groun' fer a leetle the highest-up tribe o' red men th't ever riz corn an' hair. My great-gran'pap were 'bout one o' the fust w'ite folks ez stumbled onter them air Injuns. He got pop'lar with 'em f'm the start in, an' the Injins tuck setch an uncommon fancy to him an' his family th't they pitched in an' helped 'em to make their clearin' an' to plant their corn an' dig their 'taters an' setch, sumpin' ruther cur'ous fer wild an' yoopin' Injins to do, an' showin', lost an' benighted heathens ez they was, th't they know'd a gentleman, b'gosh, w'en they seed one. My great-gran'pap must ha' ben a pop'lar feller citizen till the day o' his death, fer w'en he were tuck sick his las' time, folks usety send in f'm ten miled aroun' tellin' his fam'ly to be sure an' sen' word w'en the ol' man's funer'l were gointer be, ez they'd be glad to come. An' w'en the funer'l kim off, folks did come f'm all over, an' the

sorrer were so deep an' giner'l th't my great-gran'-pap's feller cit'zens were a day an' a night drownd-in' of it at Jonas Billduck's tavern. Poor ol' Pete Grum drownded his'n so much th't ez he were goin' home he fell inter Biler's Run an' drownded hisself.

"Ez civilization kep' a-sweepin' inter Sugar Swamp, three an' four acres at a sweep, an' the settlers got to objectin' to handin' over their scalps to the noble red men, an' to smellin' o' one another ez the childern o' the forest baked an' br'iled em durin' some o' their merry goin's on, the Injins begun to see th't it wa'n't much use fer their hangin' 'round there no longer, an' they kep' a turnin' their heels to the scenes o' their youth, an' their noses to the settin' sun, till at last th' wa'n't but a few on 'em left. It usety be a tetchin' sight, 'Squire, ez I've heerd my gran'pap say, to see them Injins ez were about to dig out f'm Sugar Swamp, flock to my great-gran'pap's clearin' to bid him good-by. The strappin' big six-foot war-hoopers 'd grab my great-gran'pap by the han', an'ez the tears 'd roll down their cheeks, makin' streaks in their paint like fish-worms crawlin' over a wet clay bank, they'd say:

"'Tain't 'cause we'm shinnin' away f'm where we was born an' riz,' they'd say, 'th't we'm feel-

in' so durn bad, but 'cause we wun't see you no more, Ol' - man - afeerd - of - his - hoe!' they'd say. 'But, b'gosh,' they'd say, 'if ye want us, sen' fer us, an' we'll clean the Swamp fer ye f'm A to izzard!'

"They called my great-gran'pap Ol'-man-afeerd-of-his-hoe, fer some reason bes' know'd to their day an' gin'ration. The ol' man were an up-an'-up, ol' fashioned Hardshell Baptis', an' consequently b'lieved th't w'ile th' wa'n't nuthin' like water fer the sperrit'al welfare o' the outside, the inside didn't need it to any p'tic'lar alarmin' degree, an' so he kep' a bar'l o' sumpin' a leetle stiff in the cellar. F'm the very fust time he met these Injins w'en he settled in Sugar Swamp, my great gran'pap c'menced to give em' good advice, an' laid down doctern to 'em; but, to show 'em th't he didn't hev no hard feelin's to'rds 'em, nor hold any grudge agin 'em, he mixed a snifter or two o' conterbution f'm his bar'l with his lectur's. It got so th't the Injins, some of 'em, 'd come over to great-gran'pap's clearin' two or three times a day to listen to good advice, an' the ol' man's lectur's got to be so pop'lar th't he had to send back to Jersey fer another bar'l o' applejack 'fore he'd ben to Sugar Swamp a month. The good ol' Hardshell Baptis' usety be the one to travel hand

in hand with civilization, an' show the misguided savage the glarin' error of his onregen'rit' ways!

"Wull, time slid on, an' one by one this tribe o' Injins quit lookin' on Sugar Swamp forever an' forever. The consid'ritness o' the most on 'em fer my great-gran'pap's feelin's ez they went away were likewise tetchin', fer arter a half dozent or so o' war-hoopers had bid far'well to him, an' foun' th't he were so cut up an' broke down over the partin' th't he never thort to onlock the celler an' mix sumpin' with the large doses of 'fectionit advice he give 'em fer the last time, the rest o' the red men didn't think it were right to harry the ol' man's feelin's no more by biddin' him good-by, an' they tore theirselves away, an' bellered their sorrow alone. At last they was all gone but one brave ol' war-hooper named Je-nutty-bo-bo. Je-nutty couldn't stan' it to leave the home o' his red-skinned paps an' gran'paps an' great-gran'paps, an' he clung to Sugar Swamp, takin' in good advice ez fast ez my great-gran'pap 'd let him, an' weepin' an' moanin' fer the good ol' war-hoopin' days th't civ'lization had come down on an' squashed, b'gosh, like a log rollin' on a toadstool.

"One day Je-nutty-bo-bo—w'ich, I fergot to tell ye, means, in English, Got-a-throat-like-a-holler-log—went to my great-gran'pap an' says:

“‘Ol’-man-afeerd-of-his-hoe.’ says he, ‘I’m goin’ a-fishin’, an’ don’t ca’c’late to be back fer three days,’ says he. ‘Kin ye make it handy,’ says he, ‘to turn me out yer good advice fer them three days all at one settin’, says he, ‘an’ give me the trimmin’s in a half-gallon jug, so’s I kin take ’em with me?’ says he.

“That were a tol’able cheeky thing fer Je-nutty to ast, but my great-gran’paw thort th’t mebbe it were all fer the best, an’ he lumped the Injin’s three days’ supply of advice an’ so-forth, an’ he went away ez happy ez the tail-end of a mighty tribe of Injins could be with a half-gallon o’ applejack all to hisself—an’ that’s pooty dinged happy. Ol’ Throat-like a-holler-log jumped in his canoe an’ paddled up Big Biler Run till he were a miled or more ’bove the high falls. ’Fore he got there he had tempered his stock o’ good advice with a consid’able number o’ pulls at the jug, an’ then he got tired o’ paddlin’, an’ got out on the shore an’ cut a great big bush an’ fastened it in the bow o’ his canoe, so’s the wind’d blow ag’in it an’ sail him along. All he had to do then were to jist steer the canoe with his paddle. Arter a pull or two more at the jug Je-nutty got tired o’ steerin’, an’ he dropped his paddle an’ laid down in the canoe, clus to the jug, an’ a-tetchin’ of it now an’ then.

“Not more’n two hours arter my great-gran’paw had sent Je-nutty-bo-bo on his way rejoicin’ he went out to Big Biler Run, a hundred foot or so ’bove the high falls, where the water runs swifter’n a mill race, an’ lookin’ up the stream he see a canoe with a bush sail in the bow, skinnin’ ’long to’ards the falls’ an’ travellin’ a miled a minute. Ez the canoe swep’ near he see th’t it were Je-nutty’s, an’ th’t the Injin were layin’ in the bottom of it, with his hand on the jug. Unless he got up an’ used his paddle in less’n a minute, th’ wa’n’t nuthin’ k’d save him f’m goin’ over the falls, but Je-nutty never moved. My great-gran’paw hollered to him to jump up an’ paddle, but the Injin jist riz half-way up. He could’nt git no funder. Wavin’ his one hand to’ards the big bush in the bow, an’ clutchin’ the jug with t’other un, he hollered back to my great-gran’paw:

“‘Too much bush!’ he hollered. ‘Too much bush!’

“An’ the nex’ minute the canoe were dashed over the roarin’ falls, an’ nuthin’ were ever seen or heerd o’ Je-nutty-bo-bo no more. The last of that consid’rit race o’ Sugar Swamp Injins had been gethered to his fathers!”

“An’ that’s the reason, is it, th’t Bill Fiddler wa’n’t to Bingmuster’s stun frolic?” said the

Squire, with a contemptuous sniff, as the Old Settler ceased.

“That’s the reason, b’gosh, th’t it wa’n’t never polite in Sugar Swamp, arter that, to say th’t a feller were drunk!” exclaimed the Old Settler. “F’m then on it were alluz ‘too much bush.’ The day o’ Bingmuster’s stun frolic Bill Fiddler had ben out ‘lectioneerin’ for his chances fer Shurff. I see ‘em carry him in the house w’en he druv back home. I don’t say he were drunk. Ye wondered w’y he wa’n’t to the stun frolic. I said, ‘Too much bush.’ I stick to w’at I said, an’ leave it to hist’ry, b’gosht’lmighty, to bear me out in it!”

JEPHA PLUM'S BOY JOE.

JEPHTHA PLUM'S BOY JOE.

“YOU often heerd o’ the man in our town w’at were so wondrous wise, he jumped into a bramble bush an’ scratched out both his eyes, an’ w’en he foun’ his eyes was out, with all his might an’ main, he jumped into another bush an’ scratched ’em in again; hain’t ye, Peleg?” asked the Old Settler of his little grandson.

“Lots o’ times!” replied Peleg. “But I don’t believe that story any more. I told Bill Simmons that I didn’t. ‘Neither do I,’ says Bill. ‘It sounds too much like your gran’pop.’ What did he mean by that, gran’pop?”

“I dunno, Peleg,” said the Old Settler, after a pause, during which he pressed his hickory cane with a warmer grasp, and a glow came on his face. “I dunno w’at Bill Simmons means, but if you kiu manage to coax him over inter our woodshed t’mor’ or nex’ day, an’ ’ll let me know when he’s there, I’ll git an inklin’ o’ w’at he means, b’gosh, or th’ hain’t no virtue in strap oil no more! So ye don’t take no stock in that story

about the wise man, hey, Peleg? Well, I dunno. It didn't happen in the Sugar Swamp deestric', that's so, an' that's ag'in it, to start with. If things o' that kind were happenin' anywhere, they'd most likely ben heerd on ez turnin' up in Sugar Swamp the fust thing. Truth is, Peleg, th't w'en I git to thinkin' back on some o' the happenin's o' Sugar Swamp, I don't feel like siniwatin' anything ag'in that wise man an' the bramble bush, an' the reason I fetched him up an' ast ye 'bout him were to show ye by recomemb'rin' some o' them sing'lar happenin's for ye, how keerful we orter be about 'siniwatin' ag'in things. Now, there were the sarcumstance th't happened to Noar Racklam in the ol' days o' Sugar Swamp. It were ez sing'lar, 'most, ez this here wise man a-scratchin' of his eyes out, an' then gittin' mad an' scratchin' of 'em in ag'in. Noar Racklam were a keerless chap an' worked fer my ol' pap. He were mowin' in the back medder one day, in his bare feet, an' laid the scythe down in the grass w'ile he went to take a swig outen the cider jug that stood in a fence corner in the shade. Ez he were goin' back to his work he see a feller in the road on t'other side o' the lot th't he wanted to talk politics with, an' he started on a run to overhaul him, trippin' along through the grass right over the spot where

he'd laid the sharp scythe. He got to the feller, an' were talkin' away, w'en it kim to him all of a sudden th't his foot were feelin' sorter queer. He looked down an' diskivered th't his left heel were gone. That were quite a chunk offen him, for Noar had a foot th't could yield half a pound o' heel, easy. W'en Noar seen th't his heel were off he started back acrost the medder, the nighest way home. He got skeerter an' skeerter ez he run, an' by the time he sot his foot down nigh where he'd quit work, he couldn't go no further, an' jist wilted right down like the grass he'd been cuttin', an' didn't know nothin' more till my ol' pap, who had gone over to see why Noar didn't come to supper, were a-shakin' of him, an' a wantin' to know w'at were up.

"'W'at in Sam Hill's the matter?" says pap.

"'I've los' my left heel!" says Noar, comin' to, an' 'memberin' the sitiuation. 'Ain't that matter enough?" says he.

"My pap looked at Noar's left foot. Th' were jist ez much heel on it ez th' were on the right foot, but lookin' closter my pap see a red streak runnin' all around it where it j'ined the foot. The hull sitiuation were ez plain ez day to my pap in less'n three seconds. Noar had stepped on the scythe blade ez he were runnin' arter the feller

'crosst the lot, an' the blade were so sharp th't he didn't notice that it cut his heel off like slicein' a tomater. Then w'en he did find out th't his heel were off, an' he tore back 'crosst the medder, he sot his foot, all unbeknownst to him, plumb an' squar' on his half pound o' heel, jist where it had dropped. The heel not being cold yit, it grafted right on the foot ag'in, an' went to growin' in its place ez if it hadn't never been nowheres else. It were a little sore fer a day or two, o' course, but arter that it were jist ez proper a place fer a stun bruise to roost on ez t'other heel were, an' it lasted Noar till his dyin' day.

"There ye hev one warnin', Peleg, not to 'sini-wate ag'in happenin's setch ez the wise man's th't jumped inter the bramble bush—but 'twixt me an' you, sonny, he couldn't ha' ben so consarned wise, arter all, or he wouldn't ha' jumped in no bramble bush in the fust place. Another warnin' th't I recomember in Sugar Swamp were Joe Plum. Joe were Jephtha Plum's oldest boy, an' I s'pose he were the hardest nut of a boy, up to the time he were 20 year old, th't ever waked up the echoes o' Sugar Swamp. From the time he were 9 year old he could outsw'ar anything but ol' Jerry Crab th't th' were in the hull deestric'. All the ambition young Joe had were to l'arn to sw'ar so's he

could beat ol' Jerry, an' w'en Jerry let hisself out on the sw'ar, folks sp'ected every minute to hev showers o' fire an' brimstun peltin' of 'em. Wull, young Joe were gittin' 'long tol'able clus on the heels o' ol' Jerry, w'en one day he suddently foun' th't he couldn't sw'ar at all, 'cause he hadn't ez much voice ez a mud turtle, an' couldn't talk no more 'n a chippy bird kin crow. Joe had ben struck dumb, Peleg, in a twinklin'. An' w'at do ye think done it?"

"Lightning from the sky," said Peleg.

"No, it wa'n't, sonny," said the Old Settler.

"Earthquakes!"

"No. 'Twa'n't none o' the flashin's or the rumblin's or the rollin's o' natur', Peleg. It were a calf th't struck Joe dumb—a yearlin' bull calf. The calf were Joe's, an' were so pesky an' contrary th't Joe usety go out in the barnyard an' practise his swearin' on it, fer the calf 'd git him so consarned mad by its peskiness th't Joe said it helped him along amazin'. One evenin' Joe were havin' a lesson with the calf, an' it were setch a powerful one that it druv the hull family out o' hearin' of it. The hired man were the only one th't stayed, an' he said th't Joe got to rollin' it out so ter'ble by an' by, th't even the calf couldn't stan' it no longer, an' jist took a run an' sot his

head squar' an' hard ag'in Joe's bread-basket. The hired man said he heerd a passel o' cuss words tumble out o' Joe's mouth ez if they'd been shot out all to wunst, an' then everything were stiller th'n a deaf an' dumb funer'l. The calf backed away, lookin' skeert at the dead silence th't folloed his plunk inter Joe's stomick, an' Joe stood ez still ez a fence post, starin' at the calf, with his eyes a-bulgin'.

"'Be ye hurt?' the hired man hollered.

"Joe made a lot o' chokin' noises an' some terrible faces, but he couldn't speak a word. The calf had tumbled sumpin' out o' order inside o' Joe, an' he was struck ez dumb ez a b'iled pa'snip! Some folks said it were a jedgment, an' some said it were appleplexy o' the palate, but w'atever it were Joe couldn't sw'ar no more, an' he fell inter the dumps an' begun fer to pine. He'd git mad easy, an' he'd swell up an' git red in the face, an' pull his hair ez if he'd scalp hisself, he wanted to spit out his feelin's so bad an' couldn't. Lippy Corkright, the hoss doctor o' Wild Gander Ridge, see Joe one day w'en he were tryin' to speak his mind.

"'If that chap don't get rid o' some sw'arin' afore many days he'll bust his b'iler ez sure ez ye're born!' said Lippy, an' folks stood back an'

gawked at Joe w'enever he took one o' his spells, an' shook their heads an' said:

"'Jeewhizz! If he ever does break out ag'in, Sodom an' G'morrer 'll be our portion, b'gosh, an' th' hain't nuthin' kin save us!'

"Six months or so arter Joe were struck dumb by the bull calf, Little Blue Lightnin' captur'd the deestric'. Ye 'member Little Blue Lightnin', Peleg? He were the mule th't strayed inter Sugar Swamp one cold night, but where he kim from nobody never know'd, an' fust takin' possession o' Uncle Pete Howy's clearin', perceeded to boss the hull deestric', an' were so mean and pesky an' overbearin' th't folks actu'ly put it up to lay fer him some night an' fill him with lead. They didn't dast do it in the daytime fer fear they mowtn't kill the mule, an' then he'd reco'nize 'em an' make their futur' mis'abler th'n he would in the nat'ral course o' his onregen'rit an' perverse cussedness. Ye 'member, Peleg, how Simon Ki-loaf turned up in the Sugar Swamp deestric' 'bout this time, fell in love with Little Blue Lightnin', an' broke his sperrit by drivin' him, in spite of hisself, five miled down hill like a steam ingine, with both of his hind feet fast in the dashboard, where he had slung 'em jist fer fun an' couldn't git 'em out ag'in, with Simon a-hangin' to 'em

like a sheeptick to live mutton, an' hollerin' an' yellin' at Blue Lightnin', an' playin' the gad on him enough to draw tears from a tan'ry teamster. That trip down the five miled hill took all the tuck outen the mule, ye 'member, an' he settled down inter a quiet an' 'spectable feller-citizen; but if it hadn't 'a' ben fer a big dissyp'intment th't overtook him a little w'ile afore Simon Kiloaf took him in hand, even that big run on two legs wouldn't 'a' ben enough to turn him from the error of his ways.

"Joe Plum hated Little Blue Lightnin' wuss'n snakes, an' ev'ry time he'd see the mule he'd git one o' them swellin' up an' hair-pullin' spells o' his'n, an' ye could almost see the ch'icest kind o' sw'arin' stickin' out all over him, an' jist more th'n strugglin' to git on the outside an' make things hum. The mule hadn't ben in the dees-tric' two days 'fore he see jist how the land lay with Joe, an' th' wan't nuthin' th't give him more fun th'n to put hisself in Joe's way w'enever an' wherever he could, fer nuthin' else but to jist see Joe rear an' tear an' swell, a-tryin' to sw'ar at him. It were wuth missin' a rassel with a b'ar to see the way that mule 'd stand off an' grin at Joe, an' then heehaw the aggervatinest kind w'en Joe 'd give it up an' dig fer some'rs else, fer fear he'd bust.

“’Fore Joe Plum had ben struck an’ knocked dumb by his calf, his strong holt fer showin’ off his sw’arin’ p’intz were camp-meetin’s, an’ the way he usety let hisself out then were shockin’ to the wust ol’-time sinners th’ was in the deestric’, an’ the deestric’ had some th’t an’ ’arthquake couldn’t shock. It kim around camp-meetin’ time ag’in, for the fust time arter Joe’s sw’ar works had been upsot, an’ it were a tetchin’ sight to see Joe rasselin’ to oncork hisself an’ scatter the brethern an’ sistern wunst ag’in. It made it all the wuss fer him ’cause Little Blue Lightnin’ kep’ circ’latin’ ’round the campin’ ground, follerin’ Joe’ and injoyin’ his swellin’s an’ his tearin’s. One day Joe were hangin’ ’round within ten foot o’ where Dominie Skinner were standin’ on the platform an’ exhortin’ the meetin’ the powerfulest kind, but wa’n’t stirrin’ up a single sinner to jine the mourners. Joe were havin’ one o’ the wust rassels with hisself he ever had, an’ them th’t was watchin’ of him was tremblin’ fer fear th’t he’d sartinly bust out that time an’ no mistake. Little Blue Lightnin’ were jist ahind Joe, an’ arter injoyin’ the rassel fer a minute or so, he thort he’d git a leetle more fun outen it th’n usual. This here idee o’ the mule’s turned out to be a good thing fer Joe, but it were a great dissy-

p'intment to the mule, an' in less th'n three minutes arter the idee were carried out, Little Blue Lightnin's smiles was gone, an' with his ears a loppin' like a wet towel on a fence rail, he sneaked away an' wa'n't seen ag'in fer a week. He had sowed the seeds of his everlastin' ondoin'.

"This idee o' the mule's fer gittin' more fun outen Joe th'n usual were simple. He jist turned hisself 'round, an' 'fore any one see w'at he were up to he sot both his heels ag'in Joe, six inches or so under his hind gallus buttons. The mule must 'a' sot his heels ag'in Joe tol'able snug, fer Joe riz in the air like a b'loon, an' kim down kerplunk on his feet, right on the platform 'longside o' Dominie Skinner. Ez he struck he give his hand a whirl around his head an' hollered;

"'Hooray for Blue Lightnin'!"

"Them were the fust words Joe had got rid of in a year an' better, an' the natur' of 'em were so much like Sodom an' G'morrer, jist w'at folks was 'spectin' if Joe ever got his voice back ag'in, th't the meetin' begun to scatter like sheep. Dominie Skinner landed offen the platform in one jump an' took to the woods. Some folks crammed their fingers in their ears so's they couldn't hear the ter'ble sw'ars th't Joe 'd natur'ly roll out o' hisself arter they had ben cooped up so long, an'



"THEN, SONNY, BE KEERFUL HOW YE 'SINIWATE."—Page 205.

women bellered an' young uns howled. But w'at did Joe do? Did he pile up cuss words round there like stuns, an' fire 'em at his skeert and tremblin' feller citizens? No, Peleg, he didn't. He jist turned to an' finished Dominie Skinner's preachin', an' done it so 'bang up an' powerful th't in less'n half an' hour th' wa'n't a hide-bound an' scoffin' sinner in that camp-ground, b'gosh, th't hadn't j'ined the mourners! It wa'n't Sodom an' G'morrer th't Joe had hoorayed fer w'en he landed on the platform, but fer the pesky little mule th't hadn't only oncorked the works that the bull calf had corked up, but by the onusual power of his heels had upset the hull natur' o' Joe's innards, 'cordin' to the way 't had been perdestynated from the beginnin' o' time.

"Hain't these reckomember'nces o' Sugar Swamp pooty nigh ez curious, Peleg, ez that man in the bramble bush?"

"Curiouser!" said Peleg.

"Then, sonny, be keerful how ye 'siniwate, and ye'll make yer poor ol' gran'pap happy. An' if ye want to make him a leetle happier yit, try an' coax Bill Simmons over to our woodshed!"

**BAMSMUZZLEGIGGED BY CIRCUM-
STANCES.**

BAMSMUZZLEGIGGED BY CIRCUM-
STANCES.

“WULL, Major,” said the Squire, as the Old Settler came into the tavern one Thanksgiving evening, “how’d yer turkey set?”

“Tol’able, tol’able,” replied the Old Settler. “But it’d be a-settin’ a durn sight better if it wa’n’t fer some sarcumstances that happened. Brother Van Slocum an’ a couple o’ the sistern that’s mixed up with M’riar in the doin’s o’ the Feeders o’ Them that Hungers an’ the Clothers o’ Them that’s Naked S’ciety sot down to dinner with us, an’ sarcumstances kim with ’em. Sarcumstances I kin come pooty nigh handlin’, ez a giner’l thing, but Brother Van Slocum an’ the sistern, took together with sarcumstances, is a leetle more’n I kin git away with. Do ye foller me, Squire?”

“Wull, no,” said the Squire. “Not e’zac’ly.”

The Old Settler was silent for a while, and then said:

"Ye recomember Pigeon-toed Thumply, don't ye, Squire?"

"Dunno ez I do," replied the Squire. "But I recomember his gran'pap pooty well."

"Jeewhizz, Squire!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "Pigeon-toed Thumply were eighty year old hisself when I were a boy! Ye'd hef to be pooty nigh ez old ez M'thuseler to recomember his gran'pap!"

The Squire stroked his chin and doubled his underlip between his thumb and finger for a minute or so, thinking deeply.

"Humph!" said he, by and by. "Is that so? Come to think on it, Major, mebbe it were Pigeon-toed Thumply's gran'son that I recomember, 'stid o' his gran'pap. That's it! It were his gran'son I recomember! O, yes, Major! That were it. His gran'son."

"Squire!" exclaimed the Old Settler, and any one with half an ear could have heard him on the other side of the road, "I've ben settin' down to-day with sarcumstances to which Brother Van Slocum an' the Feeders an' Clothiers was access'ry afore the fact, an' I stood it: but I want to tell ye right here, b'gosh, that I ain't agointer come here fer a leetle recreation an' be bamsmuzzlegigged! Do ye understan' me? You nor nobody else kin

set here, b'gosh'lmighty, an' bamsmuzzlegig me!"

The Old Settler's vehemence made his face as red as the wattles of the turkey he had killed for his Thanksgiving dinner, and he thumped his cane on the floor in a way that had not been heard for many a day. The Squire and Sol, the landlord, were amazed.

"Bamsmuzzlegigged, Major?" gasped the Squire. "What'n under the dome o' the canopy o' the blue firmermint on high is it to be bamsmuzzlegigged, an' who's doin' it to ye?"

"Ha! ha!" ejaculated the Old Settler. "Innercence on tap! Innercence on tap, b'gosh! Ye draw on yer innercence jist ez Sol here does on his beer bar'l! What's bamsmuzzlegiggin', hay? An' who's a-doin' of it? Ha! ha! It don't make no differ'nce what bamsmuzzlegiggin' is, but you're a-doin' of it, an' doin' of it to me! I shake off sarcumstances an' Brother Van Slocum an' the sistern, an' come over here fer symp'thy, an' what do I git? I git bamsmuzzlegigged, b'gosh! That's what I git! Solomon," said the Old Settler to the landlord, plaintively, "ain't tha no balm in Gilyud nowheres?"

"I think tha is, Major," replied the landlord. "Ten cents a hoot. Three fer a quarter."

The Old Settler gazed at the landlord a moment, and then fell back in his chair in a pose expressing helplessness. The Squire, having recovered from his surprise at the vehement charge the Old Settler had made against him, bristled up and said :

"I've ben a feller citizen in this deestric' now, boy an' man, fer goin' onter better'n sixty year. I've been pathmaster, hog const'ble, jedge o' 'lection, and jestic o' the peace, which the same I be now, if the dockyments don't lie, an' I guess they don't, bein' straight outen the Gov'nor's office, signed an' sealed an' to me deliver'd, cordin' to the statutes in setch case made an pervided. I've been 'lectioneer'd ag'in in a way that'd make my ol' mammy wisht she'd 'a' died a-bornin' if she was on this mundane sp'ere to-day. Things has been said about me that'd raise the hair on a dead skunk's skin, but by the great horned spoon! nobody never 'cused me afore o' bamsmuzzlegiggin', an' I wanter perclaim it loud an' hearty to the four corners of the 'arth that if tha's a law ag'in setch doin's I'm agointer to hev it put onter the feller that 'cuses me of 'em, an' I'm agointer give it to him to its full len'th an' brea'th! Ye 'cuse me o' bamsmuzzlegiggin', do ye! 'Splain yerself, Major, or don't blame me when the consekences tumbles onter ye!"

"I asted ye if ye recomember'd Pigeon-toed Thumply, didn't I?" said the Old Settler.

"That's what ye asted me," replied the Squire.

"An' ye said ye didn't, but ye recomembered his gran'pap," the Old Settler went on.

"That's what I said," assented the Squire.

"An' I said that ye'd hef to be pooty nigh ez old ez M'thuseler if ye know'd his gran'pap, didn't I?"

"That's what ye said."

"Then ye turned round an' said that, come to think on it, it wa'n't Pigeon-toed Thumply's gran'pap, but his gran'son, that ye recomember'd, didn't ye?"

"That's what I did."

"Then I want to tell ye right now, b'gosht-'lmighty, that when ye said so ye were tryin' to bamsmuzzlegig me! Pigeon-toed Thumply were eighty year old when I were a boy, b'gosh! Pigeon-toed Thumply never got married, an' consequently he didn't hev no gran'son fer ye to recomember! If that ain't bamsmuzzlegiggin', what is it? Solomon, I leave it to you. Ain't that bamsmuzzlegiggin'?"

"Is it?" replied the landlord. "Wull, I should say it were! In the fust degree! It's bamsmuzzlegiggin' in the fust degree, an' nothin' shorter!"

"I pecavvy!" said the Squire. "I plead guilty, an' ast fer the mercy o' the court. But I didn't never think that at my time o' life I'd go so fur outen the straight an' narrer path ez to bamsmuzlegig anybody. I won't never dast run fer office ag'in. They've cir'clated it that I killed my gran'mother an' stole my blind sister's pig afore now, an' folks overlooked setch little things ez them. But if they fetch it up ag'in me that I bamsmuzzlegigged a neighbor, the jig is up with me! Solomon, that balm in Gilyud, I think ye said, were three fer a quarter. Setch bein' the case, dish us up a quarter's wuth, an' me an' you an' the Major 'll put it some'rs where it can't be bamsmuzzlegigged."

All of which having been done to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, the Squire said:

"So ye sot down with sarcumstances at yer Thanksgiving dinner, hay, Major."

"'Deed an' double I did!" replied the Old Settler. "Sarcumstances, took together with Brother Van Slocum an' some o' the sistern o' the Feeders an' Clothers. Them's what I sot down with. M'ri'ar hadn't told me nothin' 'bout Brother Van an' the sistern comin' to jine the festive board, or I'd 'a' done differ'nt. I've got a gobbler that's ben struttin' round now fer nine year an' better,

an' if I'd 'a' know'd that the Feeders an' Clothers was gointer come in an' help make me feel thankful I'd 'a' got up stren'th enough an' chopped the head offen that gobbler for 'em to gnash on. Ez it was, I killed the ch'icest spring turkey tha were in my flock, an' the ghost o' that turkey 'll ha'nt me, now, till my dyin' day. I'll wake up nights, I know I will, an' hear that onfort'nit turkey singin' 'Plunged inter a gulf o' dark despair,' an' singin' of it in bass, ez long ez this lamp o' life o' mine holds out to burn. The fust I know'd that Brother Van Slocum an' the sistern was gointer be with us an' pervent any o' that turkey bein' left over fer slicein' up cold, I heerd a knock at the door, an' when I opened it who should be there waitin' to git in but Brother Van.

"'A-w-w!' says he. 'An' how is Brother Giles?' says he.

"'Tol'able, Dominie,' I says. 'I s'pose you're goin' round gittin' sumpin' together fer Afric's sunny fountains an' Injy's coral strands,' I says.

"'No,' he says. 'We'm lettin' the onfort'nit heathens hev a day off,' he says. 'We'm with 'em in the sperrit, but we'm gointer pay a leetle 'tention to the flesh here to home to-day. I'm 'spected here to dinner,' he says.

"Sayin' o' which, Brother Van kim in an' hung

his coat on my peg an' sot his hat down on the settin' room table. He were solemnner than usual, I think. I could see 'Hark from the Tombs' stickin' out all over him. M'riar kim in from mashin' her 'taters in the kitchen an' shook hands with him an' went back ag'in. Brother Van sot down, an' follerin' right on his heels, almost, along kim Sister Popover an' Sister Bulger. Arter they had shook hands an' sot down, Brother Van says:

"'Wull, Brother Giles, how is it with you?' he says.

"'Oh!' I says, 'I am able to set up an' take a few, yit,' I says.

"'Wine is 'a mocker!' says Sister Popover.

"'Wull,' I says, 'that's pervidin' how you'm fixed ez to change,' I says.

"'Strong drink is ragin'!' says Sister Bulger.

"'Not around here it ain't!' I says. 'If you're 'spectin' anything o' that kind,' I says, 'I'll hef to dissyp'int ye,' I says.

"'Who hath redness o' eyes?' says Brother Van.

"'M'riar hath,' I says, 'but you ortn't to twit on facts,' I says. 'M'riar's got a sty,' I says, 'an' she can't help it. 'A sty,' I says, 'cometh like a thief in the night, an' don't go 'way wuth a



"O, SISTER, IF I HAD BUT THE WINGS OF A DOVE!"—Page 217.

red cent,' I says. 'M'riar hath redness o' eyes,' I says, 'an' I don't think she'd like it to hev ye twit her on it,' I says.

"I dunno how much further these leetle exhortin's would 'a' gone if M'riar hadn't 'a' come in jist then an' said dinner were ready; but the way my dander were gittin' up I've an idee that they'd 'a' gone jist fur enough fer me to hev sot Brother Van out on the doorstep. We went out to dinner, an' arter I had helped Brother Van an' the sistern to turkey a couple o' times, an' were thinkin' how nice things was goin'—'cause Brother Van an' the sistern hadn't no use fer words—all of a suddent Brother Van lays down his knife an' fork, an' lookin' over to M'riar, with his hands crossed on his stomach, he says:

"'Oh, Sister, if I had but the wings of a dove!'

"That were more'n I could stand.

"'Consarn ye!' I says, 'here's a turkey that's ez fat an' crispy ez the best turkey that kings ever sot down to!' I says. 'You've had both legs an' both wings an' a big hunk o' the breast, not mentionin' the back an' the gizzard, an' more'n a ladle full o' stuffin'!' I says, 'an' now ye lay back an' sinniwate ag'in these victuals by wishin' ye had the wings of a dove!' I says. 'Plain Thanks-givin' turkey hain't good enough fer you!' I says.

'You're built so durn fine that ye want to be fed on the wings of a dove, hay?' I says. 'M'riar,' I says, 'this is a shame! Ye hain't done the squar' thing by me!' I says. 'Why didn't ye tell me ye were goin' to hev this delicate brother here to-day,' I says, 'an I'd a gone out an' gethered a hummin' bird or two,' I says, 'an' ye could 'a' stewed 'em in honey for him,' I says, 'an' then I could 'a' gone out inter the cold world,' I says, 'without one wave o' trouble rollin' acrost my peaceful breast!' I says.

"Sayin' o' which I got up an' grabbed my hat an' left the Feeders and the Clothiers to their self, an' I'll bate four shillin', b'gosht'lmighty, that they'm a-slidin' down Greenlan's icy mountains an' a-clankin' of error's chains like all possessed, this very minute!"

"An' I shouldn't wonder but what ye'd win," said the Squire. "But what has Pigeon-toed Thumply got to do with it? That's what I want to know."

"He hain't got nothin' to do with it," replied the Old Settler. "Speakin' o' the wings of a dove kinder put me in mind of Pigeon-toed Thumply, that's all. But I've got a quarter, Squire. S'pose'n we put some more o' that balm in Gilyud where it can't be bamsmuzzlegigged?"

MARIA TELLS A STORY.

MARIA TELLS A STORY.

THE Old Settler had gone out for his usual evening's meeting with the Squire and the boys at the tavern. His amiable wife, Maria, was busy at her knitting in the old-fashioned kitchen. Peleg, after long and wearying efforts, had succeeded in solving on his slate the knotty mathematical problem his teacher had given him that day as to how much a man who had purchased a dozen eggs at nine cents a half-dozen would have to sell them for to make a profit of a cent on each egg. Then Peleg watched his grandmother as she made her needles click at her work, and finally said:

"Gran'pop can remember back a good ways, can't he, gran'mammy?"

"He kin 'member back so fur sometimes," said Maria, giving her needles a sharper click, "th't I think he must ha' ben old enough to vote w'en Methus'ler were jist born. But then ag'in, w'en I see th'at he can't 'member fur enough to split the

kindlin' over-night, it seems to me ez if he couldn't be old enough to spank."

Peleg mused for a few minutes over his grandmother's answer, and then opened a new subject of inquiry.

"From what gran'pop says," said he, "bears must have been awful thick in Sugar Swamp when you and him was young."

"B'ars was plenty enough," replied Maria, "but they wa'n't so thick but w'at a few trees had room enough to grow here an' there."

"But gran'pop thinned 'em out pretty well, didn't he?" said Peleg.

"Wull, not so p'tic'lar many," said Maria. "He mowt ha' cleared off a couple acres or so."

"A couple acres of bears!" exclaimed Peleg, opening his eyes in astonishment.

"B'ars!" said Maria, smiling at Peleg. "Not b'ars, no! Trees!"

Peleg was silent again for a spell, but was not inclined to give his grandfather up so, and presently began once more.

"What did you do with all the bearskins gran'pop used to bring in from his hunts, gran'-mammy?" said he.

"I had a muff made outen it, sonny," replied Maria, with a still broader smile on her face.

"But the skin was so young th't the fur on it didn't wear wuth a cent."

"But, gran'mammy," said Peleg, with much concern, "gran'pop killed a heap o' bears in Sugar Swamp, didn't he?"

"Bless yer heart, sonny!" replied Peleg's grandmother. "W'y, the b'ar I've heerd yer gran'pop tell about his killin' ye couldn't git inter a Dutch barn. But he were alluz a free-handed creatur', an' I guess must ha' distribbited his b'ar 'mongst the poor 'fore he k'd git home with 'em. Yer gran'pop's left hand never know'd w'at his right hand done, an' for a matter o' that, I hain't never been able to find out myself w'at either his right hand or his left hand has ever done. Yes, Peleg, yer gran'pop has killed more b'ar with less powder th'n any one I ever heerd on."

"And panthers?"

"Painters by the dozent, without even gittin' his feet cold. An' speakin' o' painters, Peleg, 'minds me th't I saved me an' my mammy from gittin' eat up by a painter, wunst, 'fore I was six months old yit."

"Then I guess you must have a pretty good memory yourself, gran'mammy," said Peleg, taking his turn at a smile.

"Oh! I don't 'member it myself, sonny!" said

Maria. "I unly know it from hearin' my mammy tell about it. Yer ancisters on my side was folks to be proud of, I kin tell ye. My pap was an exhorter th't k'd shake the meetin'-house winders by jist givin' out a hymn, an' w'en he sot out to pound the power inter sinners they had to keep a half miled away if they didn't want to hear him. Them lungs o' his'n reskied many a brand from the burnin', an' gethered in heaps o' second-hand pants fer the heathens 'crosst the ragin' seas. I got my lungs from pap, an' a good thing it turned out th't I did, too. My mammy usety say th't w'en I was a young un an' sot out to beller wunst, the saw-mill next door couldn't drowned my beller out.

"W'en I was six months old our folks had an ol' hoss th't they called Spanker. Early in life he had ben a racer, an' even in his declinin' years, w'ich was w'en we had him, he k'd go like a streak if he wanted to; but Spanker had a disposition th't made him a leetle onsartin to drive, fer if he took it inter his head to go ye had to let him go till he changed his mind an' stopped. He giner'ly went like all possessed w'en ye didn't want him to, an' stood still w'en ye wanted him p'tic'lar to go. My mammy's folks lived twenty miled from where we did, an' most o' the way was

through the woods. One day, w'en I was six months old, mammy took it inter her head th't she'd hef to take me to her folks an' show me off. So pap hooked Spanker to the sled—it were in the winter—an' mammy bundled me up, an' away we started fer to make our visit. Spanker buzzed along, so my mammy said, like an ingine, 'cause she p'tended th't she wanted him to go slow. Painters was tol'able thick in the woods yit, an' w'en we had gone mebbe ten miled mammy heerd one a-yellin' ahind us. She looked back an' seen it bounce outen the woods inter the road. It were a powerful big un, an' not more'n four rod ahind us. Mammy see th't it were terrible hungry an' sassy, but the way ol' Spanker were tearin' along she didn't hev no fear th't the painter k'd ketch us. It gained a leetle ev'ry wunst in a w'ile, though, an' wunst it looked ez if it was gainin' a leetle too much, an' mammy got skeert a leetle an' fergot herself. She give Spanker a clip with the lines to make him go faster. That were all the hint the contrairy ol' hoss wanted. He know'd then th't he were wanted to hurry up, an' he jist stopped in the road ez if he'd ben shot, an' wouldn't stir another step. Then mammy thort it was all up with her aud me, o' course. The painter kim a tearin' along like a hurricane. It got within

three jumps of us, an' mammy had give up. But jist then it seemed to hit me somehow th't things wa'n't runnin' ez smooth ez they orter, an' I give a kick an' a squirm and sot my lungs to workin'. My mammy said th't w'en that beller o' mine broke out amongst them piney woods the painter couldn't ha' stopped any quicker if he had run ag'in a tree. His eyes stuck way out, he were so took back. Then I broke out with another yelp, an' the painter didn't wait to hear no more. He turned an' dug fer the woods, an' my mammy said th't he never stopped wunst to look back, ez fur ez she k'd see him cuttin' it through the trees. Then I cooled down, an' by an' by Spanker got it in his head th't we was want-in' him to stand there, an' away he started, an' he never stopped till he got to my mammy's folks."

"Did you ever see the panther again, gran'-mammy?" asked Peleg, drawing a long breath.

"No, sonny," replied Maria. "But w'en I were ten year old I met a b'ar in the woods, an' if b'ars kin be sorry, that b'ar must ha' ben sorry it ever met me. We had a neighbor livin' a miled through the woods from us, an' I usety run on errands over there fer my mammy. Wunst they borried my pap's gun, an' one day, w'en I went

there to git a cup o' m'lasses fer mammy, they asted me if I thort I k'd carry the gun back with me, ez they was busy, 'an' didn't know w'en they k'd git it home. I said I could, an' I shouldered it. The gun were loaded, 'cause it wa'n't proper in them days to send back a borried gun unloaded. I'd got about half-way home w'en I seen a big b'ar come out o' the brush. It walked to'rds me quite a piece 'fore it seen me, an' then it turned an' broke fer cover ez fast ez its legs 'd carry it. I were skeert at first, but w'en I see the b'ar turn tail an' run I got mad, an' made up my mind that I wouldn't go home till I had a shot at the b'ar, anyhow. B'ars likes sweet things, Peleg, an' kin smell 'em a good ways, an' so I sot that cup o' m'lasses down in the woods an' hid ahind a stump. 'Twa'n't long 'fore I see the ol' b'ar come a sneakin' back. He jumped on that cup o' m'lasses an' stood up to drink it. I rested my gun on the stump an' banged away. The m'lasses never done that b'ar no good, for he tumbled right where he stood, an' died without hardly givin' a kick. I took the cup back to the neighbor's an' got some more m'lasses, an' then went home an' tol' pap how I killed the big b'ar.

“‘You’re a good gal, M’riar,’ says he, ‘an’ I’ll jist make ye a prophecy,’ says he. ‘You’re a

good gal, an' you'll git the best man in the county fer a husban'!' says he.

"My pap were a man of a good many p'int's, Peleg," concluded Maria, "but ez a prophet he had a heap to l'arn."

THE TWIN UNCLES.

THE TWIN UNCLES.

“WULL, Squire,” said the Old Settler, as he took his accustomed seat at the tavern, “what’s the news?”

“The latest I’ve heerd,” replied the Squire, “is that Sabin Biffles’s wife has ben doin’ of it ag’in.”

“Doin’ of it?” said the Old Settler. “Doin’ o’ what?”

“Twins!” replied the Squire, and his tone implied that he looked upon such a proceeding on the part of Mrs. Biffles as something most reprehensible.

“Pooh!” exclaimed the Old Settler. “Tha ain’t much news in that!”

“That’s so!” said the Squire. “That’s the third time durin’ six or seven year. An’ yit Sabin Biffles comes up smilin’ an’ chipper, an’ I bate he thinks the Queen o’ England can’t hold a candle to one side o’ his wife Sooky. Now if I was him, if I wouldn’t be skitterin’ around fer a divorce it’d be queer! That’s what it would!”

“Fiddlesticks!” said the Old Settler. “What’s

twins in p'tic'lar, anyhow? Leastways, fer a Snively. Sooky Biffles were a Snively, an', lookin' back fer forty year an' better, I can't recomember when tha wa'n't twins in the Snively fam'ly. That's jist the reason I didn't marry inter the Snivelys. Mag Snively, ol' Jep Snively's gal, were the nicest an' snappin'est Snively o' the hull passel, an' she were dead sot on havin' me. But that idee that seemed to ha'nt the Snively fam'ly that the more relations the Snivelys had in a short time the better'd be fer the kentry, kind o' made me shy off, an' Mag married 'Riar Flott. I recomember that arter 'Riar'd been married ten year, an' tha was four yoke o' twins in his fam'ly already, he kim in one day lookin' the most on-merciflest worritted an' desparin' mortal man that anybody ever see. Folks said to wunst that they guessed tha was five yoke up to the Flott clearin' now.

"Wull, 'Riar,' I says to him, consolin'-like, 'twins agi'n, hay?'

"'No!' says 'Riar, bright'nin' up consid'ble. 'No,' he says, 'not ez bad ez that, quite. My barn burnt down las' night,' he says, 'long with them spotted steers o' mine,' he says.

"Twins where tha's a Snively mixed up with 'em, Squire, hain't nuthin' amazin'. Twins is ez

ketchin' ez measles or the hookin' cough when it comes to a Snively. But what's twins in giner'l, anyhow? Nuthin', 'cept that they'm two babies 'stid o' one. An' that's the only tthing, b'gosh, that makes 'em twins. What's Sooky Biffles's last uns, Squire? School marms or bark peelers?"

"School marms," replied the Squire.

"Both on 'em?"

"Yes, both on 'em."

"That's diskerridgin'! The market is crowded with school marms. Tha's more school marms in the deestric' now than tha is young idees to be taught how to shoot. An' here's the woods jist howlin' fer bark peelers, an' will be fer many a year to come! School marms is doin' well if they git fifteen dollars a month an' board round, an' bark peelers kin git twenty-five or thirty jist fer the astin'. Sooky Biffles has made a mistake, b'gosh! 'Specially fer a Snively. But that ain't nuther here nor there. They'm twins. Gal twins, an' consekently sisters. Tha hain't nuthin' onusual in two gals bein' sisters. Twin sisters ain't nuthin', no more'n twin brothers is. But s'pose they'd 'a' ben twin uncles, like a couple o' ancistors o' mine was wunst? That mowt 'a' ben sumpin' to talk about, Squire."

"Yes," said the Squire, sniffing contemptuously.

"An' if your aunt Hanner had ben your uncle Pete, that mowt 'a' ben sumpin' to talk about, too!"

"'Cordin' to which," said the Old Settler, "I guess you never heerd of ol' Hollerback Tidd o' Sugar Swamp."

"Never heerd on him!" exclaimed the Squire. "Why, I recomember him durn well!"

"Recomember him!" said the Old Settler, looking disconcerted. "Why, jeewhizz, Squire! He's ben dead these eighty year an' better!"

"Don't keer!" said the Squire. "That ain't my fault. I kin recomember folks that's dead, can't I? Tha ain't no law ag'in it, is tha? Hollerback Tidd! Why, it don't seem no more'n yiste'day sence me an' Hollerback usety gallyvant together. An' a nice, clever chap he were, too! Hist'ry hain't never did Hollerback Tidd jestice yit!"

"Squire!" said the Old Settler, sternly. "Make fun o' hist'ry, if ye wanter, but don't make fun o' facts! Hist'ry kin stand it, but facts is skeerce an' strugglin', an' orter be inkerridged, b'gosht-'lmighty! I dunno what hist'ry mowt 'a' did to Hollerback Tidd or what it mowtn't 'a' did, butt he facts in the case is that he wa'n't a nice clever chap, not by a jugful! Tha wa'n't nobody ez ever

got along better ez to ketchin' hol' to' things ez come his way than Hollerback Tidd did, an' tha wa'n't nobody ez ever could hold on to 'em faster arter he ketched 'hold onter 'em, nuther. He had the name o' bein' the meanest man that ever sot down in Sugar Swamp, 'less it mowt 'a' ben Balaam Bonutt, and Balaam were Hollerback's mos' p'tic'lar friend. He said he liked Balaam, 'cause Balaam had the right idees o' things. Balaam's leadin' idee were that cats was made jist a-purpose to ketch rats an' mice, an' fer nothin' else, an' that consekently if they didn't ketch rats an' mice enough to keep 'em alive they'd hef to starve to death. To carry out this idee o' his'n he alluz kep' a lot o' cats shet up in his cabin, an' ez tha wa'n't no rats an' mice ez thort so mean o' theirself ez to hang around Balaam Bonutt's ol' cabin, the cats had to foller out Balaam's cheerin' idee an' starve. Then ez fast ez they'd starve Balaam 'd sell their hides an' their bones to keep hissself in rum an' pork, and then he'd lay in more cats to keep his idee a-workin'. Even arter Hollerback got married—fer, mean ez he were, he got married. Seems to me, b'gosh, that the meaner a man is the more he wants to git married. He treats his hosses mean, an' he treats his dog mean, but that don't suit him. He wants to git sumpin'

that he kin treat a little meaner than he kin his hosses or his dog, an' so he hunts up a wife. An' the curio'sest part o' the hull business is, he kin alluz git one, an' giner'ly a good un. So Hollerback Tidd got one. She were a Blarer—Phillesy Blarer. Phillesy were an orphint an' had a clearin'. She were a gal that were alluz afeard she'd do sumpin' an' fólks wouldn't like it. One day Hollerback Tidd stopped at Phillesy's clearin' an' says:

“‘I'm out lookin' fer a wife,’ he says.

“‘Yes?’ says Phillesy.

“‘Yes,’ says Hollerback. ‘You're 'bout the right heft,’ says he, ‘to pull in harness with me. Come along,’ he says.

“Phillesy were 'feard Hollerback wouldn't like it if she didn't, an' so she put on her things an' went along an' married him. But she didn't pull in harness with him, or leastways Hollerback didn't pull in harness with Phillesy. She pulled single, b'gosh, and Hollerback druv.

“So even arter Hollerback got married, him an' Balaam Bonutt was ez thick ez ever, an' he usety hang 'round Balaam's cabin an' argy the cat idee an' other idees sim'lar.

“‘Durn it, Balaam!’ Hollerback usety say. ‘Cattle gits along fust rate on chopped corn-stalks

an' buckwhit bran, an' it's cheap fodder. What's the reason folks can't?

"'They could if they only thunk so,' says Balaam.

"Hollerback died pooty suddent one day, and some folks alluz thunk that he'd ben tryin' to work out that idee o' his'n 'bout cut corn stalks an' buckwhit bran bein' good enough fodder fer human folks ez well ez cattle, but others thort not, 'cause if he had, they said, he'd 'a' tried it on his wife. These folks thunk that Hollerback died 'cause another idee o' his'n hadn't worked right. If tha were any thing more'n another that he were dead sot ag'in it were young uns. An' more p'tic'lar ag'in twins.

"'A young un,' Hollerback usety say, 'is wuss'n sniffles in sheep. An' twins,' he says, 'is wuss'n holler horn in cattle.'

"An' in them days in Sugar Swamp sniffles in sheep an' holler horn in cattle was wuss'n the plagues o' Egypt.

"'Twin brothers!' Hollerback usety say. 'An' twin sisters! An' twin brothers and sisters! Gosht'lmighty!' he usety say. 'What is tha to 'em, anyhow?' 'Now,' says he, 'if some on 'em would only fetch along a couple o' twin cousins or twin uncles,' he says, larfin' ez if that were one o'

the best jokes anybody ever heerd, 'tha'd be sum-pin' in it, an' I wouldn't mind dickerin' fer 'em. Twin uncles,' he says, 'd jist tickle me to death! But don't let nobody come 'round me talkin' about jist twins. Jist twins,' he says, 'wants to keep shy o' me!'

"So when Phillesy up an' fetched a couple o' twins to Hollerback one day, 'tain't likely tha were ever a madder or a rampageiner man than he were. An' he kep' a-gittin' madder and rampageiner every day fer a month. An' then he took sick, an' 'fore long folks heerd that Phillesy were a widder. An' Hollerback kep' up his rampagein' arter he were dead, fer in his will he give Phillesy the orfullest kind o' fits fer fetchin' twins jist a purpose 'cause she know'd he were dead sot ag'in 'em, an' what does he do but leave the hull o' his belongin's, from the clearin' down to the ol' hick'ry pig-poke, to Balaam Bonutt! 'Pervidin',' says he, 'that when a couple o' twin uncles comes along, Balaam shell hand it all over to them.' Ol' Squire Billup, who drawed Hollerback's will, said that when he tol' him to put that in it, Hollerback larfed like ez if he hadn't never heerd o' nothin ez funny ez that were, an' says:

"'That'll make it strong enough, I'm thinkin'!' he says. 'When twin uncles comes along, Biler's

Run 'll turn itself back'ards 'n scoot up the side o' Squawkee Hill like a monkey climbin' a tree!

"Balaam Bonutt wa'n't nowadays bashful 'bout turnin' the Widder Tidd an' her twins offen the clearin', bag an' baggage, an' he moved hisself an' his starvin' cats onter it, an' kep' on workin' out his ideas. The twins bein' boys, one on 'em was named Puderbaugh Tidd an' t'other un Uriar. When they was 'long about twenty year old,' Riar up an' says:

"'Here's what digs outen Sugar Swamp an' hunts up a livin'! An' ye don't hear from me till I make it,' says he.

"An' away he went. Puderbaugh, t'other twin, looked at things differ'nt. Tha were plenty o' room to hunt in 'round the Sugar Swamp dees-tric, an' he thort that if tha were a livin' to be hunted up he were 'bout ez likely to run ag'in it there ez anywheres else. An' he hunted fer a livin' so well that 'fore he were old enough to vote he got married to little Swifty Bunce. Swifty were a nice gal an' a pooty one. She hadn't no relations but her aunt Huldy Bean, who lived 'way over in the Bump Hill kentry. Swifty were alluz goin' over to see her Aunt Huldy, but she never jist got ready to go, an' 'fore she did git ready she up an' died, leavin' Puderbaugh a sorrerin' widderer.

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“‘An’ now,’ says he, ‘I’ll never see Aunt Huldy.’

“When ‘Riar Tidd dug out from Sugar Swamp he went straight to the Bump Hill kentry an’ fell inter a livin’ right away. He wa’n’t long in gittin’ a clearin’, an’ more’n that he wa’n’t long in gittin’ a wife. An’ his wife were Huldy Bean—little Swifty’s aunt Huldy, who was a likely gal, an’ a pooty one, too. Now, ez luck’d hev it, Huldy’s aunt, Sabra Mullpin, a young widder, lived over in Sugar Swamp, an’ I s’pose she were about the snuggest article o’ two-shill’n caliker that tha ever was in the hull o’ that deestric’. One day, ’long about a year arter Puderbaugh Tidd got to be a widderer, Huldy got a letter from her Aunt Sabra that made her squeak right out, an’ she says to ‘Riar:

“‘Riar,’ she says, ‘we’m gointer hev a new uncle!’ she says. ‘Aunt Sabra’s gointer git married ag’in, an’ we’m invited to the weddin’!’

“‘Who’s our new uncle gointer be?’ says ‘Riar.

“‘Dunno!’ says Huldy. ‘Aunt Sabra unly says he’s Swifty Bunce’s widderer, an’ I never know’d that Swifty had a widderer!’ says Huldy.

“‘Wull,’ says ‘Riar, ‘I’ll hef to go over an’ git acquainted with my new uncle. An’ I got some more relations in Sugar Swamp, too,’ says he.

"So 'Riar an' Puderbaugh's Aunt Hully packs up an' went to Sugar Swamp to git acquainted with their new uncle. An' mebbe ev'rybody wa'n't s'prised to see 'em, an' to l'arn that Puderbaugh's Aunt Hully were his twin brother 'Riar's wife! An' mebbe 'Riar wa'n't took back to l'arn that his Aunt Sabra were his twin brother Puderbaugh's wife! An' they was havin' the snortin'est kind o' fun over it, when all of a sudden Puderbaugh's eyes flew open, an' his hair 'most jumped outen its roots.

"'Gosht'lmighty!' says he. 'Riar Tidd, you're my uncle!'

"Then 'Riar's eyes popped open, an' his hair most kim nigh sheddin' itself.

"'Jeewhizz!' says he. 'So be you my uncle, Puderbaugh Tidd!' says he.

"Then they both hollered together:

"'An' we'm twins, b'gosh!' they hollered. 'We'm the twin uncles, ez sure ez a meat axe!'

"An' so they was, Squire! An' the news got around so quick that it got to Balaam Bonutt ez he were skinnin' a cat that had jist worked out Balaam's idee. An' the news must 'a' got to his fav'rit starvin' flock o' cats 'bout the same time, fer when the twin uncles went over to the clearin' to h'ist Balaam out they found him down

on the floor, with about twenty starvin' cats gnashin' away at him. An' the cats had saved 'em the trouble o' h'istin' Balaam out, fer they had h'isted him outen this vale o' tears^s themselves, an' started him ont'er the road that Hollerback Tidd had took afore him!

"But s'posin' them twins had ben school marms 'stid o' bark peelers, Squire? Then tha wouldn't 'a' ben no facts in this here case, showin' that folks can't be too p'tic'lar 'bout the kinder twins they'm havin', 'cause tha ain't no tellin' what's gointer happen, b'gosh!"

**HIRAM WUNCUT, VICTIM OF CIR-
CUMSTANCES.**

HIRAM WUNCUT, VICTIM OF CIRCUM- STANCES.

“**I** NEVER in all my born existence heerd tell on setch rampagein’ winds an’ hurricanes ez they seem to be havin’ out West,” said the Squire. “They don’t seem to stop at nuthin’, Major. They slosh housen around ez if they wa’n’t no more consekence ez to heft th’n buck-whit chaff is, an’ knock things helter-skelter an’ t’other eend up giner’ly. They’m orful to read about.”

“Pooty high winds, be they, ’Squire?” inquired the Old Settler.

“Nuthin’ like ’em ever heerd on afore!” asserted the Squire.

“Do they do anything p’tic’lar cur’ous an’ oncommon?”

“Cur’ousest an’ oncommonest ever heerd on!”

“Has any on ’em ben high enough an’ cur’ous enough to change the shirt on a man’s back ’thout his knowin’ of it?” asked the Old Settler, with the air of an examining lawyer.

"Wull, Major," replied the Squire, slightly miffed, "hurricane don't giner'ly trapes 'round the kentry playin' funny jokes."

"Ah! don't they?" said the Old Settler, with a sarcastic smile. "Wull, then, mebbe ye kin tell me wuther any o' these here hurricanes o' your'n is high enough an' cur'ous enough to git up a b'ar fight a quarter miled or more 'bove the 'arth an' durn nigh ag'in the clouds? That wouldn't be playin' no funny joke, I reckon."

"Major," said the Squire, after a moment's consideration of the subject, "if ye've got any relations ez keers fer ye, they orter take ye in hand to wunst. Ye've got permonit'ry sym'toms o' goin' crazy!"

"That hain't nuther here nor thar, b'gosh!" exclaimed the Old Settler, shaking his fist at the Squire. "Y've gone an' fetched up a heap o' talk about some high an' cur'ous winds an' hurricanes, an' ye've slung it at me without me ever givin' ye a durn provvyocation fer it. I wa'n't sayin' nuthin' 'bout no wind! Ye say th' never was any setch winds heerd on, an' w'en I 'cept yer challenge an' try to git some fac's outen ye 'bout the 'zact natur' o' these winds yer braggin' on, ye don't dast come to the dough trough, but try to sneak outen the charge ye made ag'in me by

turnin' the subjec' onter wuther I've got any relations or not! I've got ez many relations, b'gosh, ez you hev! An' they kin eat ez much ez your'n kin! Tha's this leetle differ'nce 'twixt my relations an' your'n, though: Your relations kin eat ez much ez mine kin, but mine alluz has it to eat, b'gosht'lmighty."

"I don't keer a durn fer you nor yer relations!" shouted the Squire, shaking his fist as threateningly as the Old Settler had shaken his. "Ez fer eatin', I dunno how much your relations kin eat, but I know one o' their relations who kin drink a durn sight more'n anybody else's relations th't I ever know'd; but he don't alluz hev it to drink, though, unless somebody else buys it!"

"Is present comp'ny 'cepted, Squire?" exclaimed the Old Settler, jumping to his feet and brandishing his cane. "Is present comp'ny 'cepted? Is it? Or shell I consider th't yer a liar? One or t'other, b'gosht'lmighty! W'ich shell it be?"

"W'ichever one ye durn please!" exclaimed the Squire, snapping his fingers under the Old Settler's nose. "If the shoe fits ye, consarn ye, put it on!"

The Old Settler glared at the Squire and the Squire glared at the Old Settler. The latter's

cane was raised over the Squire's head and the Squire's fist was very close to the Old Settler's nose. The two veterans had never before been seen in attitudes quite so threatening. But nobody thought it worth while to interfere. By and by the Old Settler lowered his cane, but his glare remained. The Squire's fist dropped, but the snap did not leave his eye. Then the Old Settler exclaimed:

"Who said I thort ye were referencin' to me? I never thort o' setch a thing, b'gosh! Thuz more present comp'ny th'n me here th't's relation o' my relations. Yender sets Sol Duzenberry. He married M'riar's secon' cousin, an' d'ye s'pose I'm gointer set still an' hev ye throw impytations on Sol? Not w'ile I kin git up an' pertest, b'gosht-'lmighty!"

"Wull," said the Squire, a good deal gentler, "is th' any o' your relation's relation here 'sides you an' Sol?"

"No, th' ain't," replied the Old Settler.

"Then, Major," said the Squire, "I don't mind sayin' to ye th't I didn't mean Sol."

"All right, Squire!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "I 'cept yer 'pology!"

The Squire and the Old Settler shook hands and sat down, the Squire's eyes twinkling as he

winked at the boys, while the Old Settler ordered "a leetle sumpin' refreshin' fer all han's."

"Major," said the Squire after a while, "I think ye said a spell ago th't I made a charge ag'in ye an' wouldn't stan' by it. How'd I make a charge ag'in ye?"

"Wull, Squire," replied the Old Settler, "speakin' o' them high an' cur'ous winds o' your'n, ye said th't I hadn't never heerd o' winds ez was ez high an' cur'ous ez them. That were a charge ag'in me, an' a serious one, an' w'en I begun to try an' git some fac's outen ye 'bout them winds o' your'n ye drifted to subjec's ez was fur-rin' to the question, an' a leetle onfort'nit."

"Setch bein' the case, Major," said the Squire, "I'll take back the charge, an' ast ye to perceed with yer 'zamination o' me ez to wuther them winds o' mine, ez ye call 'em, was ekal to sartin things or wuther they wa'n't. Replyin' to yer two fust questions now, I'll say th't none o' them winds o' mine never dreamt o' changin' a man's shirt 'thout him knowin' of it, an' ez fer gittin' up a b'ar fight 'mongst the clouds, they wouldn't had no more idee o' doin' of it th'n they'd had o' takin' up a c'lection fer the heathens in Afferky."

"That's w'at I thort, b'gosh!" said the Old Settler. "An' now, then, Squire, was any o'

them winds o' your'n high an' cur'ous enough in their natur' to hev a man arrested charged with cattle stealin'?"

"Never, sir!" replied the Squire, with the solemnity of a witness in court.

"Good!" ejaculated the Old Settler. "Now, sir! Did any o' them winds o' your'n ever show their height an' their cur'ousness to be setch ez to change the veenoo of a case in court an' save an innercent man from persecution?"

"Never!" answered the Squire.

"Then, Squire," said the Old Settler, "th' has ben winds and hurrycanes a durn sight higher an' cur'ouser th'n them o' your'n, an' I'll prove it to ye by the case of an ancistor o' mine, who lived in the Sugar Swamp deestric' at an 'arly day. 'Cordin' to the dockymments, his name were Hiram Wuncut. I wun't say that the winds they had in the Sugar Swamp deestric' in them days was higher an' cur'ouser th'n any th't had ever ben heerd on afore, 'cause it mowt be a charge ag'in somebody, but the fam'ly dockymments says they was, an' also says th't they was oncommon sudden an' contrairy in their dispositions.

"If ever th' were a victim o' sarcumstances, the dockymments says, his name were Hiram Wuncut. Hiram were a poor man, but he were ambitious.

He had a clearin' th't were contin'ally bein' squatted on by a b'ar th't didn't make no bones o' walkin' off with a sheep or a pig or a calf, right afore Hiram Wuncut's eyes, an' it was the ambition o' Hiram to lay that b'ar low. But the b'ar were too cunnin' a chap fer Hiram, an' he continered to gether in the livin' projuce o' Hiram's farm an' keep Hiram poor. The b'ar didn't seem to bother nobody else's sheep nor calves but Hiram's, an' so, w'ile his neighbor Philander Boles k'd raise wool enough to make him nice flannen shirts, an' his calves grow'd up inter cows an' oxen, Hiram had to keep on wearin' ruther used up ol' cotton shirts th't had kim with him w'en he landed in Sugar Swamp, an' his calves couldn't stay with him long enough to git to be cows nor oxen.

"Them winds o' the Sugar Swamp deestric', so these fam'ly dockymments says, usety come up so suddent th't one minute yer corn in the garden wouldn't be shook by ez much ez a zephyr, an' the next minute yer house 'd be sot down in the nex' township by a streak o' wind. Folks in housen th't was bein' scooted through the air in one d'rection 'd meet housen from the neighborin' deestric's passin' along in t'other d'rection, them winds run in setch contrairy streaks. Hiram Wuncut alluz

said th't nothin' th't none o' them winds mowt do would ever s'prise him not one ioty.

"One arternoon Philander Boles's wife hung out her wash, an' lef' it out over night. 'Mongst the wash were one o' Philander's flannen shirts. Nex' mornin' w'en she went out to take in the wash the flannen shirt were gone, an' in its place on the line were a cur'ous-lookin' cotton shirt. That were astoundin', but w'en Philander found th't his yoke o' steers were gone, 'long with his wagon, th' were a time on that clearin', an' no mistake.

"'One o' them tarnal winds must ha' ben playin' hob ag'in, las' night,' said Philander, 'but I never know'd one of 'em to take a shirt offen a line and pin another un in its place afore, an' hitch a yoke o' steers to a wagon an' drive 'em away.'

"Philander walked over to Hiram Wuncut's, w'ich were a miled away, an' he didn't find Hiram to home. Somehow or other, he went to trapesin' roun' the deestric', an' 'long in the arternoon he foun' Hiram way over beyent Lost Crow Barren, goin' west, in a dazed sort o' way, an' drivin' a pair o' steers. Philander were a cross an' overbearin' sort o' chap, an' he grabbed Hiram by the neck an' hollerd:

"'Where ye goin' with my yoke o' steers? An' w'at a-ye doin' with my flannen shirt on?'

"Hiram looked kind o' crazy at fust, an' then he rec'onized Philander, an' kim to hisself.

"'Jeewhizz!' he says. 'If it don't beat all!'

"'Sh'd say so!' says Philander.

"'It's all kim back to me now!' says Hiram. 'Fore daylight this mornin' I see that pesky ol' b'ar takin' my las' sheep. I tore fer your place to hev ye come an' help me run him down. Jis' ez I got to your cabin one o' the winds grabbed me. It husseled me round in the air over your patch for a minute or two, an' then swished me up more'n a quarter of a miled, an' started west with me. We hadn't gone fur 'fore we met that b'ar. It'd ben grabbed up by a contrary wind, an' were comin' along back east. The sight o' that b'ar riled me, an' ez he kim by me I clutched him. There we was, right in the swirl o' them two contrary winds, an' every time I'd sling the b'ar's heels up he'd kick a cloud, an' w'en he'd sling me up I'd kick a cloud. Bimeby I socked my knife clean through the b'ar's wizzen, an' he give up. Jist then, w'at should come sailin' along on the wind goin' west but a yoke o' steers, hitched to a wagon. I slung the b'ar in the wagon ez it kim up, jumped in arter it, an' away the hull on us went. Bimeby the wind begun to fall, an' let us down gradually to the 'arth, jist ez if we was

goin' down a big long hill. The hull business turned my head clean inside out, an' I ben wanderin' about like a crazy man. These is your steers, sure enough! An' I'm durned if this here ain't your flannen shirt! I've said that nothin' none o' these winds done 'd ever s'prise me, but the doin's o' this un clean kerflummixes me! Hullo! Th' hain't no b'ar in the wagon! If some one hain't gone an' stoled it, then I'll eat my ears!

"But, knowin' all about the Sugar Swamp winds ez he did, Philander were mean enough to hev Hiram arrested for cattle stealin' an' stealin' his shirt. Hiram were took back an' brought up 'fore ol' Jedge Sniffits. The Jedge were ag'in him from the start, an' Hiram ast fer a change o' veenoo, 'cause he couldn't git jestice there. Change o' veenoo were denied an' the case ordered to perceed. But it didn't, fer jist then, all of a suddent, ker-slo-o-o-o-gh! kim one o' them winds, an' the nex' second the Jedge's office an' all th't were in it was sailin' west'rd through the air like a soarin' eagle. Ten miled away, in the Wild Gander deestric', the wind let the buildin' down, an' it had n't no sooner landed th'n Jedge Sniffits hollers out:

"'Let the perceedin's perceed!'

"Then up pops Hiram. 'Not much they won't!'

says he. 'That wind has changed the veenoo o' this case! This here ain't the Sugar Swamp deestric'! This here is Wild Gander, an' ye ain't got no jurisdiction here, b'gosh! You let me go, or I'll make you sweat fer usurpatin' jurisprudence, b'gosht'lmighty, an' then we'll see who's on top!'

"Ol' Jedge Sniffits know'd too much to go on in that deestric', an' Hiram Wuncut walked out o' court, an' never went back to Sugar Swamp.

"'I won't live in a place,' he said, 'where natur' is so durn queer, an' neighbors is so mean!'"

JERRY BILFLINGER'S BALD HEAD.

JERRY BILFLINGER'S BALD HEAD.

“**I** S’POSE the baldheadedest man th’t ever lived, Squire, were Jerry Bilflinger o’ Sugar Swamp,” said the Old Settler; “an’ w’at sot me to thinkin’ ’bout him were them durn crows a-cawin’ an a-squawkin’ down yender in the woods. Eggs ain’t often ketched a-wearin’ much hair, but I wouldn’t be afeared to bate a farm, b’gosh, th’t if anybody’d shaved Jerry Bilflinger’s head an’ then shaved an egg, he’d ’a’ scraped more hair offen the egg th’n he would offen Jerry’s head! He were oncommon bald, Jerry were!”

“W’at knocked him baldheaded, Major?” asked the Squire. “Wa’n’t he wholesome in his ’arly days, or did he marry a widder?”

“Natur’ were w’at ailed Jerry,” said the Old Settler. “Jerry were born bald an’ never got over it. He had jist ez much hair w’en he were ten minutes old ez he did w’en he were twenty year old. I mean ez to his head, fer a curious

thing about Jerry Bilflinger were th't though he didn't have no hair on his head, he begun to sprout whiskers 'fore he'd cut his second teeth, an' by the time he were old enough to drop corn he had a baird longer'n a billy-goat's. It were a durn funny thing to see that amazin' youngster plantin' corn, with his head glist'nin' in the sun like a bran' new baby's, an' his w'iskers wavin' in the wind ez if he were old enough to be a reg'lar Methus'ler. What made the sight more s'prisin' were that them whiskers was ez red, almost, ez a turkey gobbler's chops. They was so red that w'en Jerry went to fetch the cattle home from pastur' he had to kiver them w'iskers up, fer the bull got his eyes on 'em wunst, an' chased Jerry clean acrosst the lot an' up a tree, where the sight o' the w'iskers worked on the bull's feelin's so th't they say he'd 'a' pawed the tree up by the roots an' settled Jerry an' the w'iskers right there an' then if some one hadn't kim along an' reskied 'em."

"W'y didn't Jerry's mammy dye 'em or sum-pin'?" asked the Squire.

"He dyed 'em hisself, wunst," replied the Old Settler, "an' it kim nigh puttin' an end to ol' Deacon Spiler o' Wild Gander Ridge. Jerry's mammy were fixin' up a tub o' dye-stuff to stain

some carpet rags with one day, an' had made the fust lot green. Jerry were playin' hoss around the tub, 'n' stubbin' his toe he pitched head fust inter the tub o' dye, an' w'en he got out his baird were the color o' new cōwcumbers. Deacon Spiler had been 'tendin' a good many stun frolics 'n' loggin' bees that spring, an' the applejack begun to make him feel a leetle shaky. He happened to be over to Sugar Swamp the day th't Jerry Bilflinger tumbled in the dyestuff an' changed his w'iskers. The Deacon had put in a few fingers of apple and started fer home. He got mixed up ez to the cross roads, an' stopped at Bilflinger's to git a leetle inf'mation. He knocked at the front door, an' who sh'd open it but little Jerry. Now Deacon Spiler didn't know nothin' 'bout Jerry nor his w'iskers, an' w'en Jerry opened the door the Deacon give a jump back. Then he rubbed his eyes an' looked ag'in. Then he give a howl, an' turnin' fer the road, cleared the fence, an' went yellin' up the road.

"'I've got 'em!' he hollered. 'Gimme room! I've got the jams!'

"He never stopped till he got to the Biler's Run dam, an' inter it he jumped. Jim Biler see him an' run to git him out.

"'Lemme be!' he hollered. 'W'en a feller gits

so he sees bald-headed boys with green w'iskers a foot long,' he says, 'it's time he quit this mundane sp'ere!' he says.

"But Bill Biler got him out, an' they tied him in bed. W'en the actual sitiuation were explained to the deacon he went home, an' 'twere a year, I guess, 'fore he ever kim over to Sugar Swamp ag'in, an' that were the last time Jerry ever had his w'iskers dyed.

"Wull, Jerry growed to be a man, but he never got no hair on his head, an' his w'iskers seemed to git redder'n ever. But Jerry thort a heap o' his glowin' baird, an' said he wouldn't swop it fer the ch'icest head o' hair th't ever growed. That's w'at he said till he begun to look around fer a wife, 'n' sot his mind on Prudence Petty, the bes' lookin' gal on Biler's Run. Prudence had a little sarcumstance of her own th't she was jist as proud of ez Jerry were of his w'iskers, an' that were six fingers on each hand. Jerry wa'n't much struck with them hands full o' fingers, but he were dead sot to tie to Prudence in spite of 'em. So he begun to shine 'round her, or tried to, but she kinder nipped him, an' didn't seem to hanker arter him, though Jerry had ben left one o' the best clearin's th' were in Sugar Swamp w'en his ol' pap died. So one night w'en he were up to see Prudence he

thort he'd find out jist w'at the matter were an' he says:

"'Pru,' he says, 'w'at's ailin o' me th't ye don't seem to keer nothin' 'bout me? Hain't I got the best clearin' in Sugar Swamp?' says he.

"'I reckon ye hev, Jerry,' says Prudence; 'but there's one thing ye can't raise on it, an' that's sumpin' I'd like ye to hev p'tic'lar if I jined ye in runnin' that clearin',' says she.

"'I kin raise anythin' on that clearin' th't grows!' says Jerry, gittin' a little huffy.

"'Well,' says Pru, 'if ye kin raise this th't I'd like ye to raise,' says she, 'I'll be willin' to hev ye divide the clearin' with me,' says she, 'an' mebbe be yer widder some day,' says she, larfin' the aggervatinest kind.

"'I kin do it!' says Jerry. 'W'at's the crop?' says he.

"'It's hair!' says Prudence, larfin' more'n ever. 'If ye kin raise a crop o' hair I'm yer huckleberry!' says she. 'W'at's the use o' me havin' all these fingers o' mine,' says she, 'if I'm to marry a man that hain't got no hair on his head? They'd be jist wasted,' says she, an' she larfed so th't Jerry broke fer home, an' fer the fust time in his life cussed his luck 'cause them w'iskers o' his'n wa'n't on top o' his head 'stid o' hangin'

onter his chin. The more he thunk of it the more he wanted to git some hair, an' so one day he went to Lippy Conkright, the hoss doctor, an' offered him \$20 and a spring shoat if he could cunjur' up some way to make hair grow on his bald conk. Lippy know'd th't Jerry hadn't never had no hair, an' so he shuck his head.

"'If we know'd where to git some hair roots,' says he, 'we mowt plough up yer scalp an' set 'em out, like cabbage plants,' says he, 'an' mebbe raise ye a crop o' hair. That's the unly way I know on,' says Lippy; 'but hair roots, I guess, is a pooty sca'ce article to git jist now,' says he. 'I hain't heerd o' none bein' on the market. Hev you?' says Lippy.

"Jerry shook his head an' looked glum. Bimeby Lippy says:

"'Natur' has been durn tough on ye, Jerry,' says he, 'an' if I was you I'd beat natur' at her own game.'

"'How's that?' says Jerry.

"'Tha's setch things ez wigs,' says Lippy. 'Hadn't ye never thort o' them?' says he.

"'No, by gum!' says Jerry. 'I never did, an' they're the ticket!' an' Jerry went home ez chirpy ez a cricket. A day or two arter that Jerry took a trip to the county seat, an' the evenin' he kim

back he went up to Biler's Run an' dropped in fer a call on Prudence Petty.

"'How be ye, Pru?' says Jerry. 'W'ich one o' them twelve fingers o' your'n 'll I put the weddin' ring on?' says he.

"'Any one on em,' says Prudence, 'th't a lock o' hair offen yer head 'll make a ring fer!' says she, larfin' in her aggervatin' way.

"'All right,' says Jerry, larfin' back at her. 'Choose yer finger!'

"Then Jerry took off his hat, an' Prudence kim durn nigh tumblin' kerplunk on the floor. She grabbed the mantletree, an' her eyes couldn't 'a' bulged out further if it had ben a growlin' an' snappin' painter that stood afore her. Pooty soon she got her breath, an' fallin' into a cheer she throw'd up her hands.

"'Wull, consarn you, Jerry Bilflinger! If that don't jist dumswizzle me!' she hollered.

"Fer there stood Jerry, holdin' his hat in his hands an' grinnin' like a b'ar eatin' honey. He wa'n't bald no more, but had a head o' hair th't kivered his bare conk like an old hen kiverin' her eggs.

"'There's the hair ye ben so durn anxious about!' says Jerry. 'Now w'en a' ye gointer come down an' help me run that air clearin' o' mine?' says he.

"So Pru she give in, an' sot the day fer her an' Jerry to git hitched, an' the news o' Jerry's hair fetched folks f'm all over the deestric' to see it. If Jerry had run fer office jist then he k'd ben elected to anything.

"Now Jerry had a sister Sally, an' he were her guardeen. She had sot her feelin's on young Sam Stover, an' him an' Sally wanted to git married the wust kind. But Jerry he didn't want Sally to marry Sam, an' put a veto on the hull business f'm the start.

"'The idee!' says Jerry. 'W'at kin Sam Stover do but tame crows, an' coons, an' b'ar, an' setch?' says he. 'An' he a-wantin' to marry Sally!' says he.

"Young Sam didn't do much else but tame crows an' setch, that's so, but he picked up a good many dollars at it, an' his pap had a sawmill, an' Sam were giner'ly thort to be all right, an' so he were. But Jerry had other idees fer his sister, an' he nipped Sam right in the bud.

"Wull, the day th't Jerry an' Prudence Petty were gointer to be hitched kim around, an' Jerry started fer Biler's. Sally had gone up to help with the fixin's the day afore. Ez Jerry were passin' by his buckwhit field he see th't two o' Jeb Crone's pigs had broke through the fence, an'

was everlastin'ly rootin' away in the buckwhit. That wouldn't do, o' course, an' Jerry hurried over an' druv the pigs out. Then he see th't he'd hef to fix up the fence or they'd be right in ag'in, an' he sot to work to do it. It were a warm day, an' Jerry took off his coat an' his vest an' his hair, 'n' laid 'em in a fence corner while he done the work. It didn't take him long, an' he were kind o' restin' an' coolin' off a little 'fore he put his things on ag'in to start fer Petty's. W'ile he were a-moppin' his head an' his face with his handkercher, a couple o' crows kim sailin' down outen the woods offen the hill, an' lit on the fence nigh where Jerry's hair were layin', an' begun a-clatterin' an' a-cawin' an' a-jawin'. Jerry didn't think nothin' o' the crows till one of 'em jumped on the ground an' begun to make a little 'zamination o' the hair. Then Jerry got kinder skeert, 'n' started to chase the crow away. The crow, seein' Jerry makin' fer it, know'd at wunst that the hair was his'n, an' wa'n't to be fooled with, so o' course the crow, follerin' out its natur', picked it up, an' t'other crow grabbed holt of it too, an' away off in the woods they sailed with the hair th't had got Jerry the best o' Prudence.

"Now, all the time Jerry were workin' away fixin' up his fences ag'in the pigs, Sam Stover were

settin' on his fence over home, thinkin' about Jerry's weddin' th't were to come off that arternoon, an' cussin' Jerry fer standin' 'twixt him an' Sally. W'ile he were cussin' to hisself, a couple o' crows th't he had tamed kim sailin' along an' lit in the yard right in front of him.

"'W'at under the canopy has them crows hooked on to now?" said Sam, gittin' down offen the fence an' walkin' over to where the crows was jawin' over sumpin' they had brung in. 'By the dancin' ghost o' ol' Kentucky!' hollered Sam, stoopin' down and takin' it away from the crows, 'if they hain't gobbled Jerry Bilflinger's hair, I'm a tea-pot!' An' Sam danced an' yelled like a crazy man, an' then went an' hid the hair in the barn. He hadn't more than done it w'en Jerry kim a-puffin' an' blowin' outen the woods.

"'Them durn thievin' crows o' your'n has snatched me bald-headed ag'in!' he hollered. 'Git me my hair, or tha wun't be no weddin' at Petty's this arternoon!'

"'Wun't Pru marry ye unless ye show up with yer hair on?' says Sam.

"'No more'n she'd marry a skeercrow!' hollered Jerry. 'Where's my hair?'

"'That bein' the case, yer right, Jerry!' says Sam. 'Tha wun't be no weddin' at Petty's this

arternoon,' says he, 'unless—' An' then Sam stopped an' looked at Jerry till the sweat rolled outen Jerry like peas.

"'Unless what?' says Jerry, jumpin' up an' down, fer it were gittin' 'long to'rds time fer the hitchin'.

"'Tha wun't be no weddin' at Petty's this arternoon,' says Sam, 'unless tha's two weddin's!' says he.

"'Two?' says Jerry. 'Who's t'other un?'

"'Me an' Sally!' says Sam, grinnin' all over his face. 'Unless me an' Sally hitches this arternoon,' says he, 'you an' Pru Petty don't !' says he.

"Jerry jumped an' swore fer a minute or two, an' then hollered :

"'Gimme my hair, consarn ye, an' come on!' said he.

"Sam got Jerry's hair outen the barn, an' went along of him to Petty's. W'en Sam told Sally th't tha were gointer be a double weddin', an' th't him an' her were the doublers, Sally jist bellered fer joy.

"'How'd ye ever bring Jerry over?' says she.

"'Wull,' says Sam, a-winkin', 'I got him where the hair were short!' says he.

"An' they had the double weddin', an' I never heerd th't anybody were sorry fer it, nuther."

THE OLD STINGO FROM SAN DOMINGO.

THE OLD STINGO FROM SAN DOMINGO.

“SQUIRE,” said the Old Settler, as he came into the tavern one cold day, in an uncommon good humor, “’spose me an’ you has a reg’lar, ol’-fashioned hot un, b’gosh! W’at d’ye say?”

“Humph!” ejaculated the Squire, his eyes twinkling; “w’at do I say? W’at did ye’ spose I’d say? W’at’s hot uns fer, to take or to let be? If they wa’n’t to take, wa’t’d be the use o’ heatin’ water? An’ w’at ’d be the use o’ raisin’ alspice an’ nutmegs an’ cloves an’ setch? An’ w’at’d be the use o’ havin’ sugar? W’at do I say? W’y, o’ course me an’ you ’ll take a reg’lar ol’-fashioned hot un, Major! That’s w’at I say!”

The Squire got up, took his quid out of his mouth and put it in his big tin tobacco box, for he wasn’t through with it yet, and he and the Old Settler went up to the bar and had their hot un. When they sat down again where the logs were snapping on the hearth, the Squire said:

“Seems to me, Major, they don’t make hot uns

nowadays ez sizzlin,' an' sarchin' an' ticklin' to the palate ez they did w'en me an' you usety put 'em away, forty an' fifty year ago."

"Course they don't!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "They hain't got the stuff to make 'em out of, nowadays!"

"I guess that's so," said the Squire.

"Course it's so!" persisted the Old Settler. "W'y, jist think back an' 'member Jonas Bil-duck's ol' stingo from Sandy Mingo th't he usety set up! That were juice with heft to it, b'gosh! There ain't nuthin' like it to-day, nuther on the 'arth below, nor in the heavens above, nor sailin' on the salty seas. I kin sniff that ol' stingo now, Squire. Don't ye 'member how it usety kinder stop an' pucker up the root o' yer tongue 'fore it went on down an' started them fires in yer innards th't ye didn't want to quinch, an' consekently didn't never pour no water arter it? Jeewhizz! An' don't ye 'member how, arter ye'd took two or three on 'em an' gone to bed, ye couldn't help git-tin' up an' dressin' yourself an' goin' down an' gittin' another un? Gosht'lmighty! A leetle ol' stingo from Sandy Mingo! Consarn its pictur', I sniff it yit!"

"Hol' on! hol' on, Major!" exclaimed the Squire, while his mouth watered, and he smacked

his lips and swallowed. "Ye make me feel sorry th't I'm livin'!"

"An' then jist to think, Squire!" continued the Old Settler. "All ye had to pay fer it were a thrippence a drink, an' Jonas alluz turned his head w'en ye poured it out! There were a gentleman, b'gosh! Tha's plenty o' lan'lords to-day, Squire, but tha ain't no Jonas Bilducks 'mongst 'em!"

"Not many, tha hain't!" assented the Squire. "'Member how liber'l Jonas usety be? Ev'ry whipstitch or two he'd say, 'Wull, come on, boys. Try a leetle more stingo!' He were a gentleman, Jonas were."

The Squire glanced toward the landlord, who was sitting not far away, and the Old Settler remained silent in a listening attitude.

"Wull, Squire," said the landlord, and the Squire and the Old Settler straightened up and looked pleased. "Jonas Bilduck were a durn fool!"

Then the landlord went and tried a hot un himself. The Squire and the Old Settler looked disappointed, but by and by the latter resumed the subject that had been interrupted.

"An' how folks did usety like the ol' stingo, didn't they? 'An' who'd s'pose th't any one ez liked stingo k'd be mean? Now there were Hi

Beedipper an' his family. They was p'tic'lar hankerers arter it. An' mebbe Hi wa'n't a jedge o' stingo nor nuthin'! W'en he fust squatted down on Blarin' Ridge with his folks, an' started in to dig an' blast a farm outen that garden spot o' the deestric', Hi wa'n't swelled out much with the fat o' the land. I usety see him, wunst in a while, goin' by with a leetle yaller jug, but I never had much to say to him. I kinder lost the run of him fer a couple o' year, an' then one day I kim acrosst him at the Sugar Swamp store. He were lookin' pooty comf'table an' indydependent, an' I up an' says:

"'Hullo, Hi!' says I. 'How ye gittin' 'long?'

"'Gittin' 'long?' he says. 'Wull, I guess I'm gittin' 'long consid'able!' he says. 'I usety lug my ol' stingo home in a two-quart yaller jug,' he says, 'an' now I roll it in by the bar'l!' he says. 'I guess I'm gittin' 'long!' he says.

"'Gosht'lmighty!' I says to myself, arter Hi had passed on, swingin' of hissself ez if he didn't keer much wuther pork were ten cents a pound or two shill'n a bar'l. 'I hain't ben treatin' Hi right,' I says. 'He's a feller-citizen that needs inkerridgin',' I says, 'an' here I've ben a-neglect-in' of him for two year an' better,' I says. 'I mus' go up to Hi's some day an' 'pologize,' I says.

'It's a durn shame the way I've treated him,' I says, 'an' it wun't do!'

"So the very nex' day I went up the Ridge to Hi's clearin'. 'Twere a good three-miled pull through the scrub oaks, but I know'd I'd feel all right arter I got thar 'n' 'pologized to Hi. I got to Hi's, 'n' Hi ast me in. I went in, 'n' sot down, 'n' 'pologized to Hi fer havin' ben so kinder offish 'n' onneighborly like with him. Hi said that were all right.

"'I hain't thort a durn thing about it,' he says.

"Wull, Squire, there I sot, and sot, all arternoon, 'pologizin' an' 'pologizin', an' tellin' Hi I were powerful glad to see he were gittin' 'long so well, till my tongue hung out, an' Hi never even ast me if I ever tampered with anything. So I got up feelin' hurt, not that I keered a durn fer any stingo, but it hurt me to find a feller-creetur' so onfeelin'. I were kinder huffy, too, an' ez I were goin' out I turned to Hi an' says, sneerin' like:

"'I thort ye rolled it in by the bar'l!' I says.

"'So we do,' he says, grinnin' like a hyeny, 'but we roll it out by the snifter,' he says, 'at thrippence a snifter!'

"That were Blarin' Ridge hospitality, Squire. I'm sorry you ever lived at Blarin' Ridge. Ye orter be ashamed of it, Squire!"

"I ain't a durn bit ashamed of it!" retorted the Squire. "Tha was jist ez good a folks lived at Blarin' Ridge ez tha ever was at Sugar Swamp, an' a good sight better! Don't you go to runnin' down Blarin' Ridge folks 'cause you footed it three miled up there a purpose to git a snifter o' stingo, 'n' got sent home with a flea in yer ear instid! It don't sound good, Major!"

"I don't keer wuther it sounds good, or wuther it sounds bad, or wuther it don't sound at all, b'gosht'lmighty!" exclaimed the Old Settler, getting red in the face and talking loud. "I tol' ye I went to Blarin' Ridge to 'pologize to Hi, Bee-dipper, an' I done it! W'en you or anybody else says I didn't, ye 'siniwate, b'gosh, an' I wun't stan' 'siniwatin' from nobody!"

"You'll stan' it from me, consarn ye, w'en ye go to runnin' down my folks!" replied the Squire.

"Who's a-runnin' down your folks?" demanded the Old Settler.

"I wonder if you didn't?"

"No, I didn't, b'gosh."

"Ye said they lived at Blarin' Ridge, an' th't I orter be ashamed of 'em."

"Then they hadn't orter lived at Blarin' Ridge. Folks is know'd by the comp'ny they keep."

"Wull, anyhow, tha wa'n't never no saddle o'

mutton found in my pap's cellar th't didn't b'long to him, sence ye said so much."

The Old Settler started out of his chair. He thumped the floor with his cane. He shook it at the Squire. He made several attempts to speak, but apparently failed to find words to do the subject justice. At last he dropped back and gasped rather than spoke:

"That's a consarned lie, Squire, an' you know it, b'gosht'lmighty!" he said.

"W'at's a lie?" said the Squire, regaining his temper as the Old Settler's ire increased.

"Th't anybody ever found a saddle o' mutton in my pap's cellar ez didn't b'long to him!" cried the Old Settler. "That story were started by that consarned Zip Butts th't——"

"Hol' on, Major!" the Squire interrupted, and he looked as pleased as Cuffy. "I didn't say anybody ever found a saddle o' mutton in your pap's cellar th't didn't b'long to him. I said nobody never found one in my pap's cellar. That's a different hoss of another color, I take it."

"Mebbe it is an' mebbe it ain't!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "But wuther it's hoss or wuther it's sheep, b'gosh, Zip Butts orter had the law took on him clean up to the handle, an' him made to sweat the sweatinest kind!"

"What fer?"

"'Cause he didn't treat Het right!"

"W'at, your Het?"

"Yes, our Het! An' she k'd had the pick o' the Sugar Swamp deestric', too. But this here feller kim a-sneakin' 'round, an' fer two winters, b'gosh, she sot up with him, a-b'ilin' ches'nuts fer him, an' pullin' 'lasses candy fer him, an' he a chawin' our apples an' swiggin' our cider, an' livin' like a steer in the oats. Tha wa'n't nuthin' 'round our clearin' th't were too good fer Mr. Butts, but I didn't take no more stock in him th'n I would in a Blarin' Ridge farm, an' I'd ruther own a blind coon dog th'n one o' them! I kep' a-sayin' to Het ev'ry wunst in a w'ile: 'Het,' I says, 'if yer 'spectin' to divide your sheer o' this clearin' with that Zip Butts ye better git yer grip on him pooty suddent,' I says, 'or the fust thing ye know,' I says, 'he'll be gone like the wind th't bloweth whither it listeth, b'gosht'lmighty, an' the places th't knows him now won't know him no more forever!' I says. But all Het'd say'd be, 'Oh, you git out, Sile! I know w'ich side o' my pancake the butter's on!' she'd say. An' w'at were the upshot o' the hull consarn? W'y, little Nance Fliffy kim over from the county seat, an' went to teachin' the young idee o' Sugar Swamp

the differ'nce 'twixt A an' izzard, an' 'twa'n't long 'fore she were pullin' 'lasses candy an' b'ilin' ches'nuts fer Zip, an' Het she were settin' down to home in sackcloth an' ashes, an' went snitterin' round the house like a sheep with the snuffles. An' the fust thing the deestric' know'd they had to git a new school marm, 'cause Nance Fliffy went off an' married Zip Butts like a thief in the night, an' no one to make her afeard! W'at were the consekences? Het hadn't but one chance left, an' he were Pete Colbash, the fiddler, an' so we had to put up with a fiddler in the family, b'gosh, all 'cause o' that consarned Zip Butts not treatin' Het right."

"W'y, say, Major!" said the Squire, "don't you know th't Het were durn lucky th't Zip didn't treat her right? Didn't ye never hear o' Zip arter he run away with little Nance Fliffy?"

"No!" replied the Old Settler, brightening.

"W'y, consarn it! Nance had to turn in an' s'port him from the start, an' in less 'an six months him an' Deacon Keever's bay mar' lit out from Sim's Corners both on the same night. They ketched 'em both two days arterw'ds, an' the next time Zip went away the Sheriff went with him, an' it were fer a six years' visit to the penitensh'ry!"

“Wull—con—sarn—his—pictur’!” exclaimed the Old Settler, and he gazed with wide-open eyes at the Squire. Then he got up, and, with a joyful bang of his cane on the floor, he cried:

“Squire, come on! Me an’ you’ll hev another ol’-fashioned hot un! No, we wun’t, ’cause we can’t git it! But we’ll hev setch ez they make nowadays, an’ we’ll say: ‘Here’s to Jonas Bilduck an’ the days o’ good ol’ stingo from Sandy Mingo,’ b’gosht’lmighty! an’ let all Zip Buttses an’ Hi Beedippers be durned!”

**THE SUGAR SWAMP SNAKE-BITE
CURE.**

THE SUGAR SWAMP SNAKE-BITE CURE.

“GREAT Spooks!” exclaimed the Squire, looking up from the paper he was reading and keeping his finger on the place. “Twenty thousand! W’at do ye think o’ that, Major? Twenty thousand’ folks dyin’ from snakes in one year!”

“W’at do I think on it?” said the Old Settler. “Wull, I think them folks must ‘a’ took their applejack pooty durn new, b’gosh, an’ a leetle too often!”

“Applejack!” said the Squire, glaring at the Old Settler. “Applejack hain’t got nuthin’ to do with it! These folks was bit.”

“Bit, was they?” responded the Old Settler. “Wull, tha hain’t nuthin’ that kin bite wuss th’n new applejack, Squire. I’ve know’d it to be sharper’n a serpent’s tooth. But who were tellin’ ye ‘bout all them folks dyin’ from snake bites? That’s a good many folks, Squire. Ye orter be a leetle keeful of yer figgers when ye set out to peddle facts.”

"Why, consarn it!" exclaimed the Squire, "here it is, right here in the paper! The paper says that last year tha was twenty thousan' folks died in Injy from snake bites!"

"In Injy, hay?" said the Old Settler. "Why, I didn't hev no kind an idee that the sarpent had got ez much of a foothold on Injy's coral strand ez all that! Humph! I must tell M'riar 'bout that, an' tha'll be a special meetin' o' the Clothers o' Them that's Naked an' Feeders o' Them that Hungers called to look inter it. This here won't never do! M'riar must call a meetin' of the Clothers and Feeders, and the sistern must line the nex' cargo o' red flannel shirts an' secon'-han' pants with leather. I ben 'spectin' they was a little too thin to pertect them heathens on Injy's coral strand. An' w'at is the news from Greenlan's icy mountains, Squire? How many folks is missin' 'long o' snakes, up there? An' does Afric's sunny fountains send in any returns? Gosht'lmighty! This'll make trouble fer my yaller leg chickens ag'in, w'en this news gits around, fer the Clothers and Feeders alluz stays to supper. W'at's the returns from Afric's sunny fountains, Squire?"

The Squire folded up his paper, put it in his pocket, and gave the Old Settler a withering look,

but said nothing. This was plainly disappointing to the Old Settler, but after a while he resumed the subject.

"Twenty thousand, hay?" said he. "I wisht I know'd the directions o' some leadin' heathen over there, an' I'd send him a letter tellin' him 'bout the never-failin' Sugar Swamp cure fer snake p'ison, an' tha wouldn't be no use o' snakes bitin' anybody in that pleasin' kentry any more, fer they'd only waste their p'ison. If anything ever were a cortion to snakes, that Sugar Swamp p'ison cure were! Gosht'lmighty, how it could draw! An' that were jist the trouble with it. It had so much heft to its drawin' powers that the danger were that if it got its hooks onter a feller that had snake p'ison in him it were liable to kill him w'ile it were curin' him. Pervidin', o' course, that ye wa'n't keerful in usin' on it. The ingrejints o' that Sugar Swamp snake p'ison cure is a secret ez nobody kin ever hev outside of our fam'ly. The perscription were thunk up by an ancistor o' mine who kim inter Sugar Swamp w'en things was skeerce. Ev'rything but b'ars an' snakes. Tha wa'n't but two bar'l o' apple juice in the hull settlement w'en this ancistor o' mine sot down there, an' folks was comin' in ev'ry day all bit up by snakes, an' consekently havin' to

be filled up with that juice in a way that were alarmin', that bein' the only snake p'ison cure ez were reco'nized 'mongst the 'arly settlers o' Sugar Swamp. So this ancistor o' mine he got all worked up over it, seein' that the way things was goin' the future were goin' to be very short, ez fur ez life bein' pleasant had anything to do with it, snakes bein' so plenty, folks bein' so willin' to be bit, an' apple juice bein' so skeerce. So he up an' says:

"'It's a durn sbame,' says he, 'to be a-wastin' good apple, jist 'cause folks won't git outen the way o' snakes! This here's got to be stopped. A feller can't hev no show at a toothful o' that apple no more, 'less he goes an' gits bit by a snake. Them two bar'l won't last more'n a month, an' then w'at are we gointer to do? I'll think up a snake p'ison cure, b'gosh, an' save the kentry!'

"An' so my ancistor went off an' thunk up a snake p'ison cure, an' its main p'int was its heft o' drawin' power. It wa'n't a cure ye took in-'ardly, but it was clapped onter the place where the snake had socked the p'ison in, an' that p'ison mowt better had a millstun 'bout its neck an' jumped inter the sea than ben foolin' 'round inside o' folks w'en that cure got arter it.

"From all I kin learn, tha were an orful hella-

baloo in Sugar Swamp the fust time that snake p'ison cure were used. Sim Janniken kim a-tear-in' in one day, an' floppin' down in the tavern ez usual, he hollers out:

"'Spooks a spinnin'!' says he, 'I'm bit ag'in! Fill me up!'

"Now, this were the third time hand-runnin' that Sim had been bit that month, an' it took a pint ev'ry time to skeer the p'ison outen him. So w'en he kim in this time an' flopped down an' waited fer Uncle Noar Tidfit to come a-rushin' out with a bottle an' a tumbler, my ancistor were there, all ready with the snake p'ison cure he had thunk up, an' he run up to Sim an' says:

"'Where'd it bite ye?'

"'Calf o' my leg!' says Sim.

"My ancistor slides Sim's trousers up, an' claps a handful o' his snake p'ison cure on the calf o' Sim's leg.

"'Hol' on!' says Sim. 'Tha ain't no use of a snake bitin' ye if ye can't hev the Simon-pure cure fer the p'ison! If I can't be cured reg'lar,' says he, 'w'at's the use o' runnin' the risk o' snakes?'

"But my ancistor know'd his business, an' clapped on the cure he'd thunk up. But he didn't know his business as good as he orter, fer he kep'

the p'ison cure enter Sim a leetle too long, and w'en he thort the time were up fer it to yank all the p'ison out, b'gosh, he found that Sim wa'n't no better'n a pig that'd ben stuck, fer the cure had drawed ev'ry duru drop o' blood outen him ez well ez the p'ison, an' w'at were left o' Sim wa'n't wuth nothin' 'cept to the Coroner.

"'Gosht'lmighty!' says my ancistor. 'The heft o' this snake p'ison cure is more amazin' than red eels!' says he.

"But he know'd a thing or two yit, and he clapped another hunk o' the cure enter the back o' Sim's neck, an' in less'n ten seconds it draw'd the hull o' that blood back into Sim ag'in, an' pooty soon Sim got up, an' shakin' his fist at Noar Tidfit, he says:

"'I hain't ben treated reg'lar!' says he. 'I've ben sot down on in this here tavern! Noar,' says he, 'if this is to be the upshot o' things, a feller mowt jist as well go to Ireland,' says he, 'where tha ain't no snakes!'

"An' then Sim scuffed out o' the tavern, lookin' disap'inted an' down in the mouth. An' the consequences o' that p'scription my ancistor thunk up was, that ez folks got to know it things changed. Where they usety come in more'n a dozen a week to git cured in the ol'-fashioned, reg'lar way fer

snake-bites, they fell off so that by an' by tha wa'n't one a month kim in, an' folks took to kill-in' off snakes ez useless hangers-on, an' a 'cumbrance o' the sile. I wonder if we could find any way to interduce that Sugar Swamp snake-p'ison cure over inter Injy, Squire?"

"Dunno, Major," said the Squire. "Seems to me, though, ez if some o' the ol'-fashioned, reg'lar cure mowt be interduced a leetle closer by. W'at do ye think about it? Wanter interduce some?"

"Wull, sence ye mention it," said the Old Settler, smiling, "I don't keer if I do."

ANDY BLINK'S OATH.

ANDY BLINK'S OATH.

“**F**OLKS th’t uses hair oil will more’n likely hef to pay a bigger price fer it th’n thuv ben a-doin’, now th’t poor ol’ Andy Blink is dead,” remarked the Old Settler. “He’s kep’ the b’ar grease market more’n stocked fer better’n forty year, Andy has, an’ hair oil consekently never riz. But Andy can’t kill no more b’ar now, an’ the upshot o’ the business ’ll be th’t the hair oil market’ll run short o’ grease, an’ up’ll go the rul-in’ price o’ b’ar’s lard, an’ folks th’t wants shiny heads ’ll hef to pay fer the shinin’, else I ain’t no jedge o’ w’at’s w’at. Ye heerd Andy were dead, didn’t ye, Squire?”

“No,” replied the Squire. “I hain’t heerd he were dead, an’ I never heerd he were livin’, nuther!”

“Then yer hearin’s durn poor, that’s all I’ve got to say!” exclaimed the Old Settler. “Anybody th’t’s ez old ez you be, an’ has lived here an’ hereabouts ever sence he were born, an’ ’ll stan’ up an’ say th’t he never heerd o’ Andy Blink, the

man ez swore he wouldn't never take no other job but killin' b'ars ez long ez he lived, an' kep' his oath f'm A to izzard, b'gosh, is either a p'varicat-in' with the truth or a-lyin', an' I don't keer w'ich horn o' the dilemmy his pants is hooked on, nuther! If yer hearin's good enough, Squire, I'll tell ye the hist'ry of poor ol' Andy. Kin ye hear it, d'ye think?"

"I'm afeard so," replied the Squire, dolefully.

"Oh! ye be, hay?" said the Old Settler. "Wull, if yer much afeard, the tavern door ain't locked, an' th' ain't no law, ez I knows on, th't'll p'vent ye goin' outen it! But wuther yer afeard or wuther ye hain't, Andy Blink's hist'ry has got to go ou record, b'gosht'lmighty, if I hef to call out the Sheriff an' a possey to p'tect me w'ile I'm a-puttin' of it there! Kin ye hear that, Squire?"

"Yes, I heerd it," quietly replied the Squire, who was looking out of the tavern window. "An' I think yer ol' woman heerd it, too, fer she stopped on t'other side o' the road, an' she 's look-in' over this way. Hullo! She's comin' over here, Major!"

"Jeewhizz!" the Old Settler exclaimed, rising hurriedly from his chair. "W'at in Sam Hill is M'riar spookin' round here fer? I'll go out the

back door, Squire, an' you tell her th't the last ye see o' me I were talkin' with Brother Van Slocum, down to the grocery!"

The Old Settler started on his tiptoes for the back door, but before he got it open the Squire said:

"W'y, ding it! 'Taint M'riar, arter all, Major! If I can't see no better'n that I'll hef to lay out a couple o' shill'n fer a pair o' new specs!"

But from the way the Squire smiled and winked at the boys, he didn't seem to be worried much over his eyesight.

"Whew!" puffed the Old Settler, as he came back and resumed his seat. "I wouldn't had a skeer like that fer nine dollars! Mix me a hot un an' a stiff un, lan'lord, an' if anybody here thinks they kin skeer the hist 'ry of ol' Andy Blink outen me by workin' on my feelin's ez a husban', b'gosh, an' a gran'father, I'll jist show 'em how easy it is to be mistook. I make no 'siniwations, Sq'ire, but I hev my 'spicions!"

"This here Andy Blink, Major; were he a Sugar Swamper?" asked the Squire, with blandness.

"It don't make no odds wuther he were or wuther he wa'n't!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "B'ars sp'iled his future, an' it were a bad day fer

the b'ar fam'ly w'en they done it; fer Andy sp'iled the future o' more b'ars fer doin' of it to him th'n a lightnin' ca'culator k'd add up in seven weeks. The last time I see poor Andy he says to me:

"'Sile,' says he, 'I'm gummed if sometimes I don't feel sorry fer 'em.'

"'Sorry fer who, Andy?' says I.

"'The b'ars,' says he. 'W'en I run ag'in 'em in the woods they know me,' says he, 'an' know-in' th't th' ain't no use, the scenes they make is enough to fotch blood from a mill stun. I've see tears roll down their cheeks, Sile, ez big ez snake's eggs,' says he, 'an' I've seen 'em drop on their knees, an' clap their paws together, an' beg fer to be let go,' says he, 'jist ez plain ez a dog kin beg fer meat. Natur'ly these here things busts my heart wussn'n a frosted ches'nut burr,' says he, 'but there's the sw'ar th't I swore forty year ago,' says he, 'an' I hef to go right on a-makin' orphint b'ars, an' widder b'ars, an' widderer b'ars,' says he, 'an' a-wipin' hull fam'lies o' b'ars offen this mundane sp'ere,' says he, 'like buck-whit chaff afore the autumn blasts,' says he. That's the kind o' man Andy Blink was, b'gosh!

"'Arly in life Andy were a timid an' a bashful feller, an' his folks was sorry fer that, fer they had ca'culated heavy on makin' a preacher outen

him. The very name o' b'ar or painter were enough to throw Andy inter conniptions, an' the smell o' powder made him sick.

"'Durn that boy!' his pap usety say. 'W'y wa'n't he born a gal an' done with it!'

"But Andy wa'n't so bashful that he didn't git to follerin' pooty clus to little Kit Chimper, the blacksmith's darter, an' to gallivantin' of her to huskin' bees an' the like, fus' thing folks know'd. That were pleasin' to Andy's folks, fer in them days the chap that wouldn't 'a' follered pooty clus to Kit Chimper if he could wouldn't 'a' ben thort much of in that deestric'. Kit she seemed to ruther hanker arter Andy more'n she did fer any o' the fellers th't was tryin' to git the inside track with her, an' that struck folks ez bein 'sorter queer, too, fer Andy were so consarned timid an' skeery, w'ile Kit wa'n't afeard o' nuthin' that clim' or crep' or swum. Wunst we'n her pap were 'way f'm home an' Kit were alone in the cabin with her mammy, the wolfs kim a-singin' 'round the house in the night. Kit she got up, took down her pap's rifle, an' goin' out in the yard stretched three o' the wolfs in the snow 'fore the rest took the hint an' dug fer the woods. An' wunst, w'en a b'ar got inter the log schoolhouse an' tried to walk off with the teacher's

dinner pail, Kit slatted the b'ar's skull in with a stick o' hickory wood, and drug the carcass home herself. Consekently, the idee of a gal a-runnin' over with vim like Kit a hitchin' to a feller with a constitution setch ez Andy were sufferin' with were the doost an' all of a sticker to folks in that deestric'. But setch were the sitiuation, an' ev'rybody were gittin' ready fer the inwite to the weddin'. B'ars has heaps to answer fer, Squire, but nuthin' is marked up ag'in 'em like w'at they done to Andy Blink about this time.

"Th' were gointer be a harvest-home dance at the Welcome Holler tavern, an' it were to be the bang-uest time th't were ever held in the hull deestric'. Kit Chimper had her heart sot on the dance, an' she didn't ca'culate to let anything short of an 'arthquake keep her home. Andy he lived two miled f'm Kit's, an' Welcome Holler were another miled or so further on. Andy were to be at Kit's 'arly in the evenin' an' see his gal to the dance, an' then see her back home ag'in, o' course. 'Long to'ards evenin' Andy, rigged out in his bes' bib an' tucker, started fer Kit's. Ez Andy often tol' me arterw'ds, he had got about half-way there, w'en all of a suddent a big b'ar kim a-slouchin' outen the woods on one side of him. Andy give a yell an' a jump, an' started

fer t'other side o' the road, but there, ez big ez life an' twicet ez nat'ral, stood another big b'ar. The only thing th't Andy thort th' were left fer him to do were to dig fer the nighest tree an' git to'rds the top. He done it, an' lookin' down, seen the two b'ars a standin' at the foot o' the tree, their mouths wide open, ready, ez Andy s'posed, fer him to fall inter 'em.

"An' thar them b'ars kep' Andy roostin' in that tree. He hollered at 'em, he threatened 'em, an' he coaxed 'em. W'enever he thort o' Kit a-settin' an' a-waitin' fer him to take her to the harvest-home dance, he got most wild, an' 'd let hisself down to'rds the groun' full o' the notion o' dashin' past them b'ars an' tearin' through the woods fer Kit's in spite of 'em. But the ba'rs 'd raise up an' kind o' spar an' grip at him, an' away Andy would skin back to'rds the top ag'in, an' holler an' coax an' threaten. Th' wa'n't no use, an' Andy had to stay on his roost. It got late at night, an' yit the b'ars staid by the tree. Then all to wunst Andy see a couple o' lights movin' through the woods. He hollered louder'n ever, an' the lights turned an' moved to'rds him. They was pine-knot torches, an' they was carried by Ben Grattan an' Phil Loper. When Phil struck the road with his light he see the b'ars.

"'By gravy!' he hollered. 'Here they be now, Ben! Who's up that tree?'

"'Andy Blink!' were the answer.

"'Mowt 'a' knowed it!' says Phil. 'Th' ain't nobody else th't 'd let two runaway tame b'ars tree 'em! Come down!'

"Andy kim down, feelin' mad an' sheepish. He didn't hev the kerridge to go on to Kit's, an' he know'd th't she had quit waitin' fer him long ago, anyhow; so he trapesed back hum. Nex' day Kit sent him a letter.

"'A feller th't won't clutch the life outen wild b'ars to git to me,' she writ, 'ain't a safe un fer me to tie to, an' consekently a feller that'll let tame b'ars skeer him out hadn't better git nigh enough to me so I kin reach him.'

"An' then Andy bought a rifle an' a big knife an' a huntin' axe, an' liftin' up his right hand, he swore th't if he lived to be ez old ez Noar an' Methus'ler put together he'd never do nuthin' but foller b'ars an' hev their blood. Then he bid his folks good-by an' took to the woods. He never went back on his oath, an' now that he's dead I'll hate th' ain't a b'ar in the kentry but w'at's a-howlin' an' a-dancin' an' a-prancin' with joy, an' a-cellybratin' the endin' of ol' Andy Blink."

